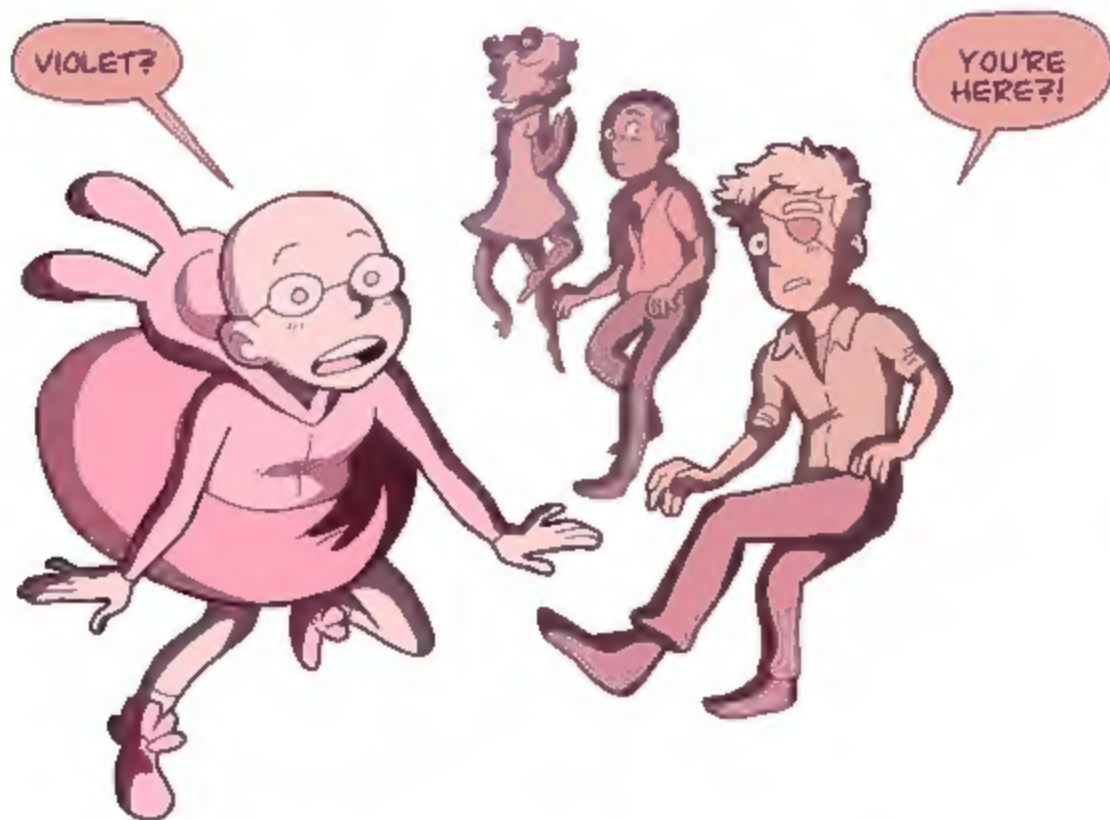
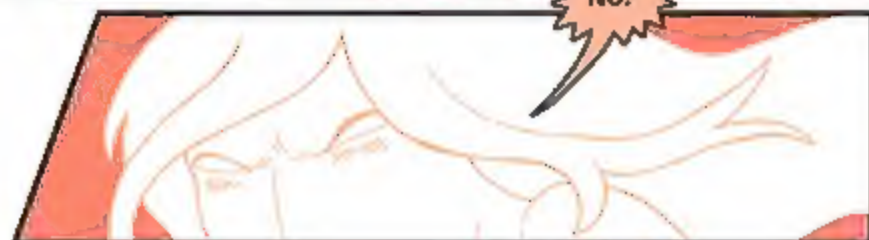


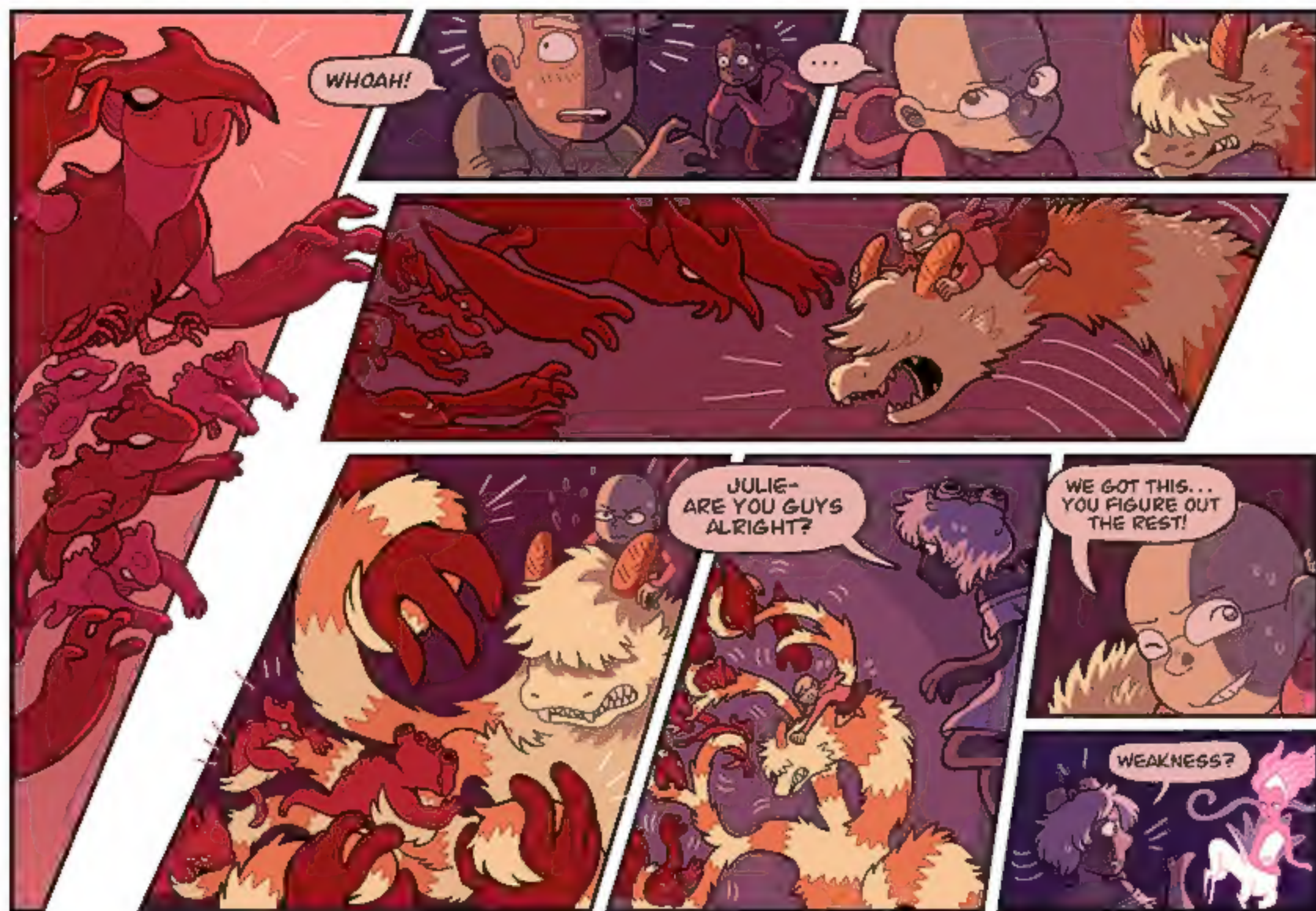
CHAPTER FORTY

HEARTS AND BONES











LULENSKI-

THAT IS HER NAME, YES?

HER ENTIRE BODY BECAME A SWARM OF MONSTERS.

THAT GLOWING SHAPE OF HER IS LIKE
THE SPOT THAT WAS ON YOUR CHEST,
OR UNDER ABEL'S EYEPATCH.

AN INVERTED VOID, TRACING WHAT HER
HUMAN SHAPE USED TO BE.



UH-HUH...

BUT HER OLD SELF IS NOT
ENTIRELY GONE.

THERE IS STILL
A PIECE LEFT FROM
HER HUMAN BODY,
WITH ALL ITS HUMAN
WEAKNESSES.



I CAN'T SEE IT,
BUT I CAN SENSE
IT IS THERE.

PERHAPS BECAUSE
I HAVE SOME KINSHIP
WITH IT.

OH!

YOU
MEAN-?



YES. HAVE YOU NOTICED THERE
ARE NO BEINGS LIKE ANIMA
WITHIN HER?

SO HER BRAIN
IS STILL NORMAL!

WELL-
RELATIVELY.



I GUESS THAT'S LUCKY.

WE'D BE IN TROUBLE IF
SHE HAD ALL THIS, AND
POWERS LIKE YOURS.



YES. WE WOULD BE
UNIMAGINABLY DOOMED.

HEH HEH...

THAT IS NOT A JOKE.



I WAS FRIGHTENED
OF HER MIND, BEFORE.



BUT NOW THAT I AM MORE
FULLY IN TUNE WITH MYSELF-

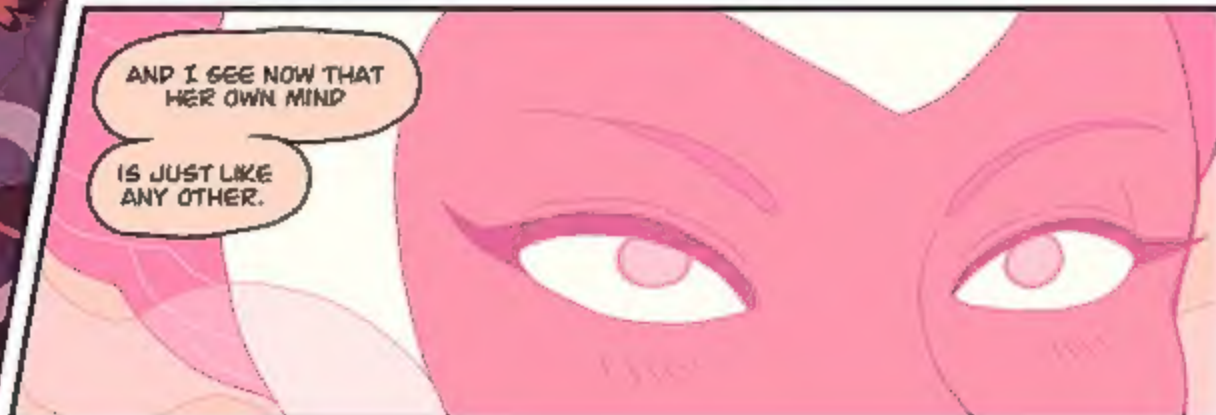
I UNDERSTAND
WHAT I WAS
FRIGHTENED OF.



IT WAS THE MANY MINDS
OF HER MONSTERS THAT
TERRIFIED ME-

THEY WERE SO DENSE
AND LAYERED, HUNDREDS
ON TOP OF EACH OTHER,
AND I COULDN'T SEE
THEIR TRUE SHAPE.

BUT THOSE MINDS ARE NOT COMPLICATED
OR DANGEROUS. THERE ARE ONLY A LOT OF THEM.



AND I SEE NOW THAT
HER OWN MIND

IS JUST LIKE
ANY OTHER.



ARGH-

YOU KIDS DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE DOING!

GUYS, WHATEVER
YOU'RE GONNA DO-

HURRY UP
AND DO IT!

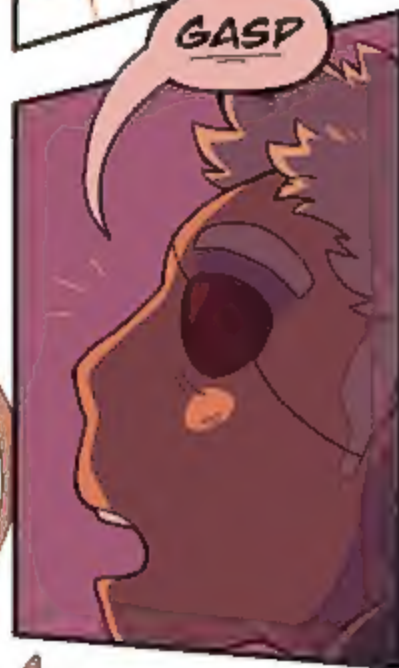
OKAY, SO THE BRAIN IS
THE WEAK POINT...

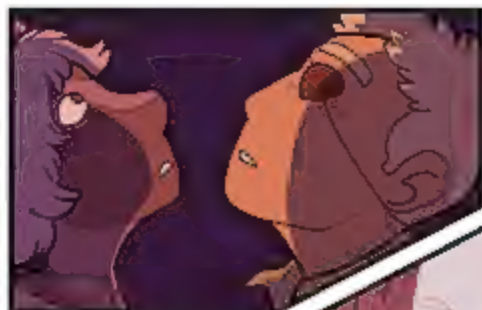
BUT WHERE IS IT?

WE CAN HELP YOU
FIND IT.



FWASH

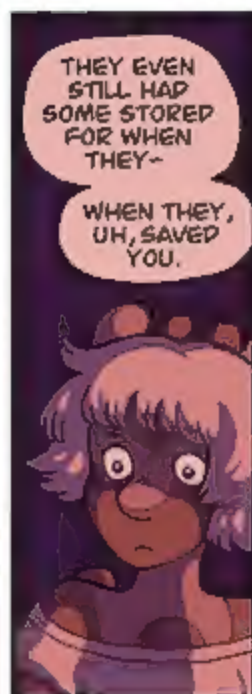
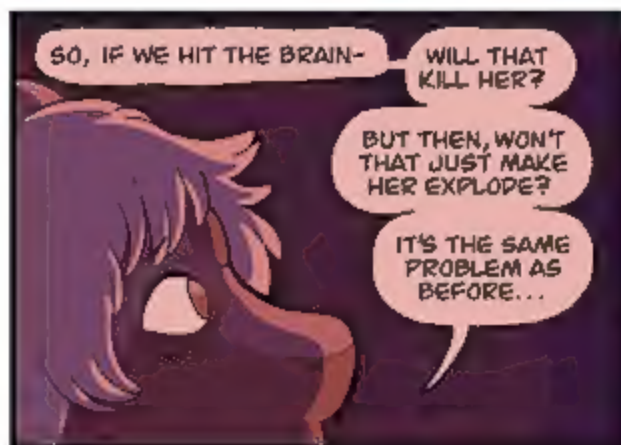


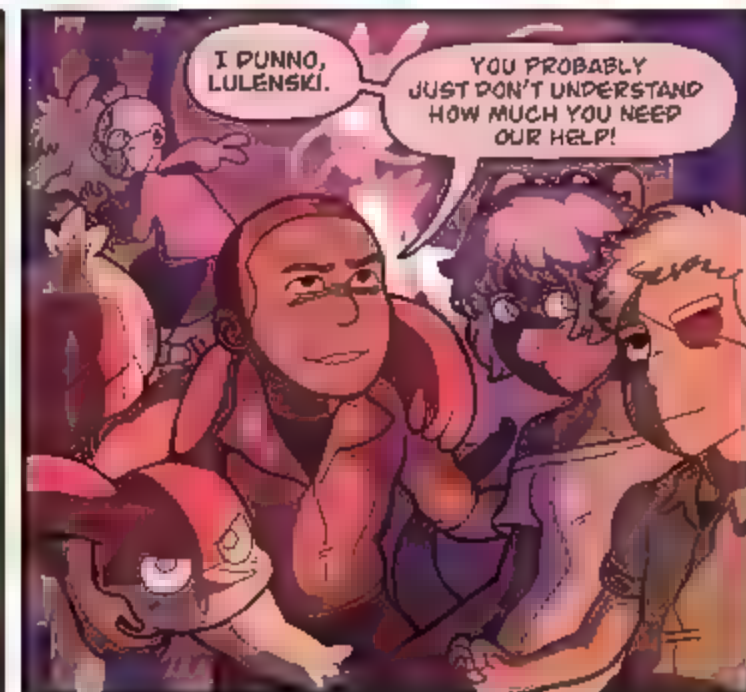


IT'S WAY
UP THERE,
ABOVE US...

OF COURSE.

THAT MUST BE
WHERE HER
HEAD IS.





IT DOESN'T MATTER
WHAT YOU DO!

EVEN IF YOU CAN
SEE WHERE MY
BRAIN IS,

YOU CAN'T TOUCH IT.

IT'S A PART OF ME

SO MY GUARDIAN ANGELS
WILL KEEP IT SAFE.

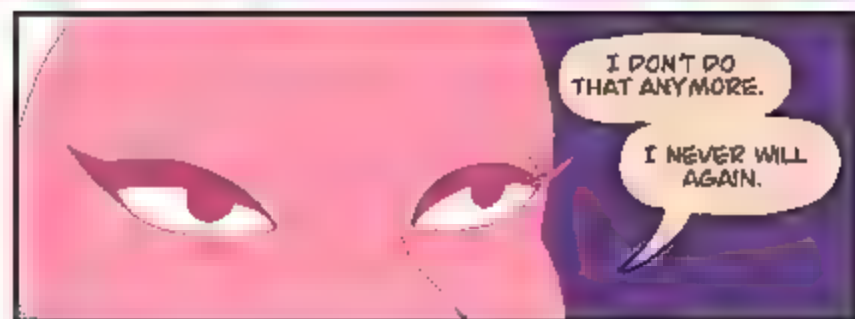
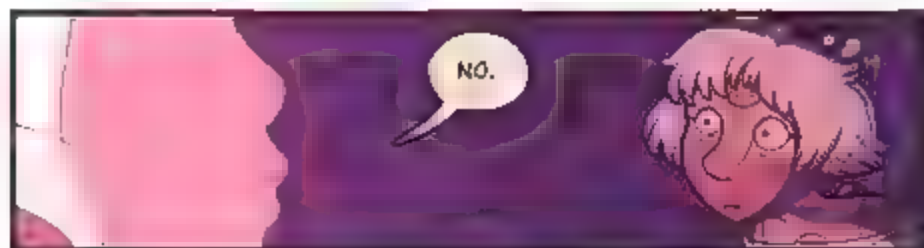
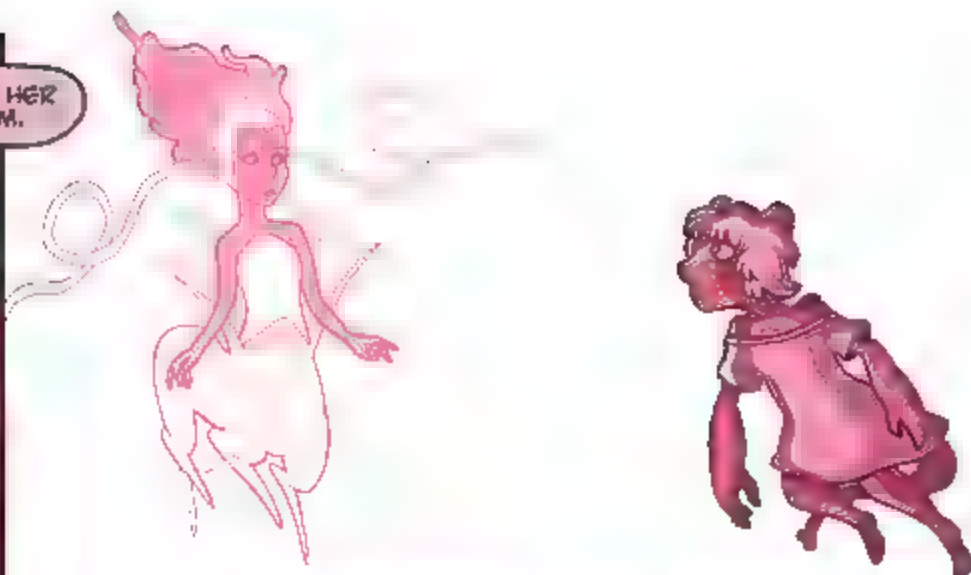
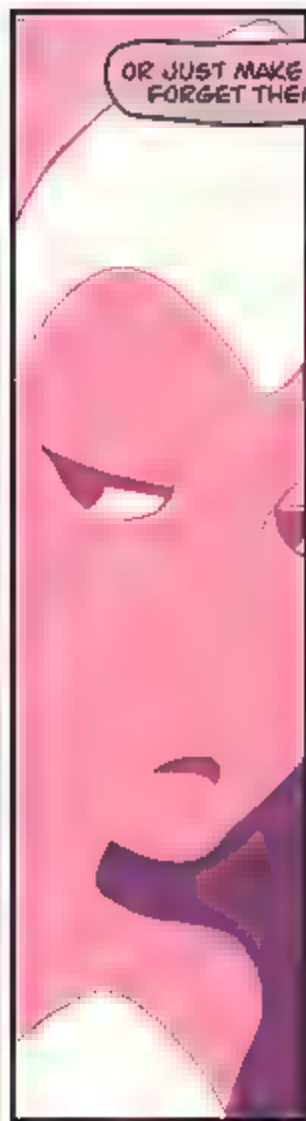
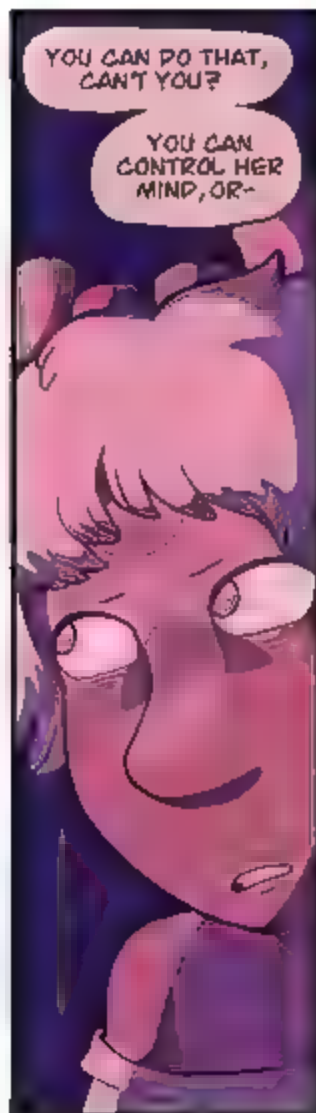
... THAT'S RIGHT.

AS LONG AS
SHE'S HOLDING ON
TO THOSE THINGS,

SHE'S INVINCIBLE.

SO WE'VE GOT TO MAKE HER
LET GO OF THEM.

VIOLET.



BUT I WILL





... AND HE'S BEEN
QUITE INSTRUMENTAL
IN SECURING
OUR LATEST
RESULTS.

IN FACT,
IF YOU HAVE ANY
QUESTIONS ABOUT
THE TECHNICAL
PROCESS,

HE'S A BETTER
PERSON TO ASK
THAN ME.

...

YOU CAN USUALLY
FIND HIM ■ THE LABS
SEVEN DAYS A WEEK,

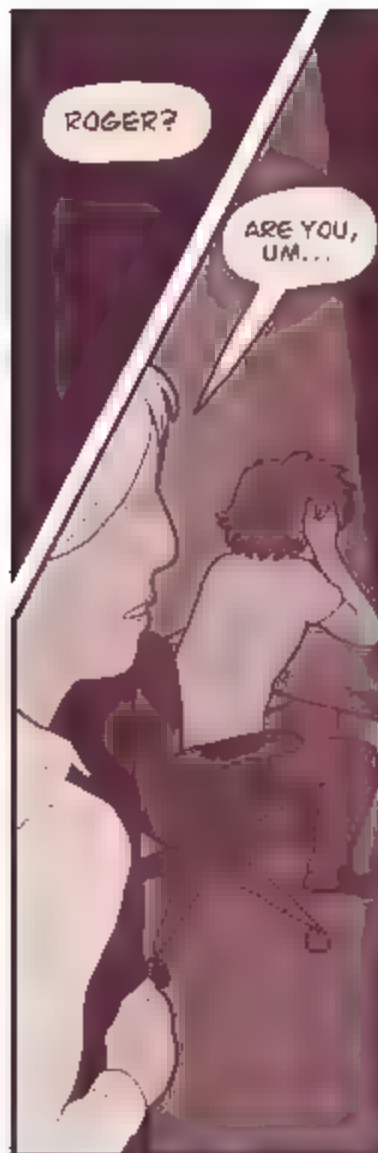
SO HE'LL CERTAINLY
BE ACCESSIBLE.

THOUGH
YOU REALLY OUGHT TO
TAKE A BREAK,
MIKE!

NO
THANKS.

NICE TO MEET YOU.

EXCUSE ME.



ROGER?

ARE YOU,
UM...



I

I JUST DON'T
WANT TO HURT
THOSE KIDS.



WAIT, WHAT?

THE ALPHA
SPECIMENS?

I DON'T THINK
WE'LL HAVE TO
HURT THEM.

THOSE WEAPONS
THEY GAVE US
ARE JUST FOR
EMERGENCIES,
RIGHT?

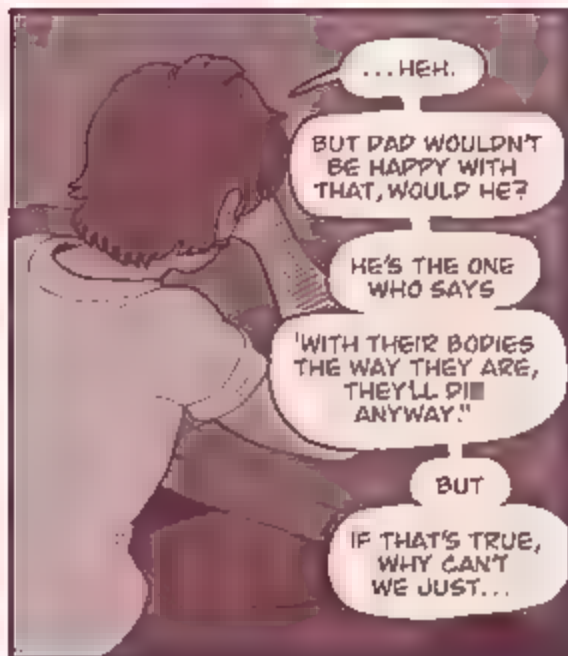


YOU THINK
THAT IF WE
BRING THEM
BACK HERE,

THEY'LL BE
BETTER OFF?



I WISH WE
COULD JUST
LEAVE THEM
ALONE...



...HEH.

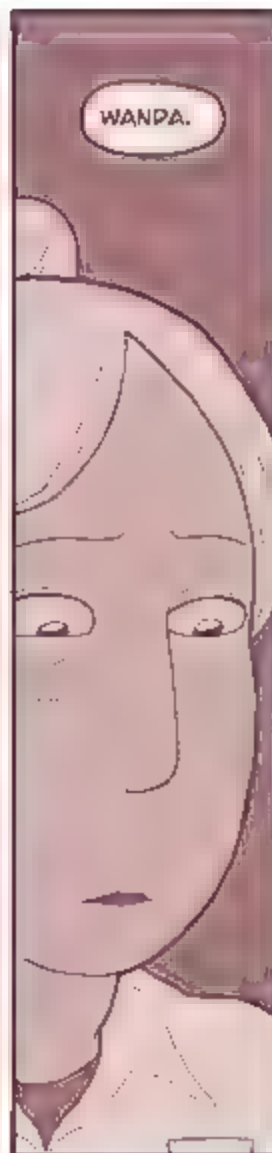
BUT DAD WOULDN'T
BE HAPPY WITH
THAT, WOULD HE?

HE'S THE ONE
WHO SAYS

"WITH THEIR BODIES
THE WAY THEY ARE,
THEY'LL DIE
ANYWAY."

BUT

IF THAT'S TRUE,
WHY CAN'T
WE JUST...





EVERY TIME I SEE A NEW
KIND OF MONSTER

IT TAKES MY
BREATH AWAY.

THEY'RE SO STRANGE
AND UNIQUE.

NEVER QUITE WHAT
I EXPECTED.

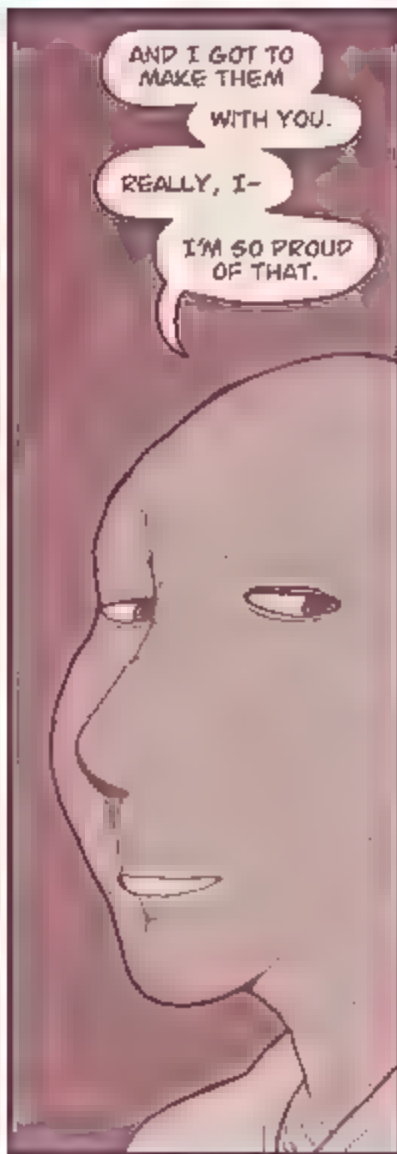
AND I GOT TO
MAKE THEM

WITH YOU.

REALLY, I-

I'M SO PROUD
OF THAT.

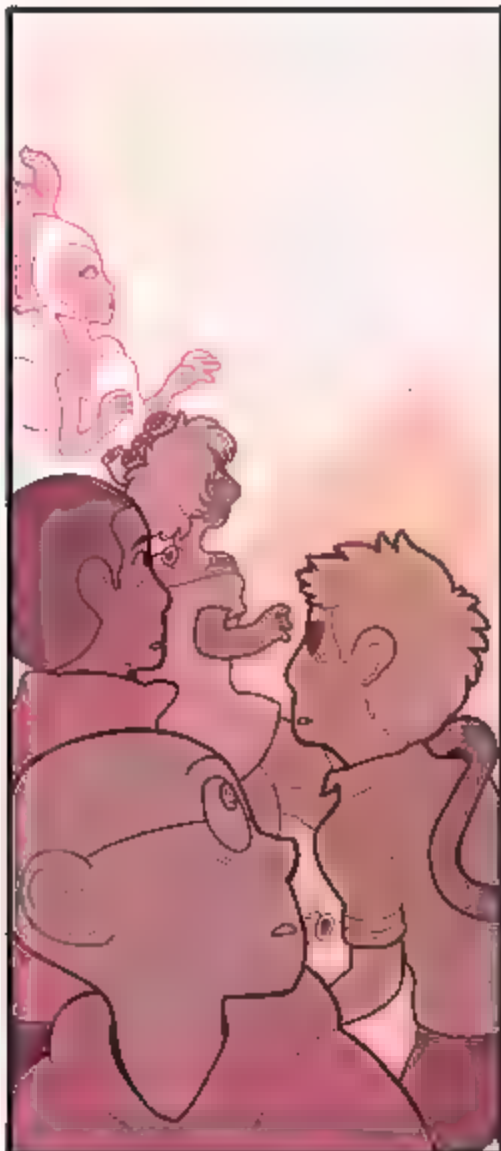
I CAN'T WAIT TO
SEE WHAT WE
MAKE NEXT.











THEY DIDN'T...

THEY NEVER-

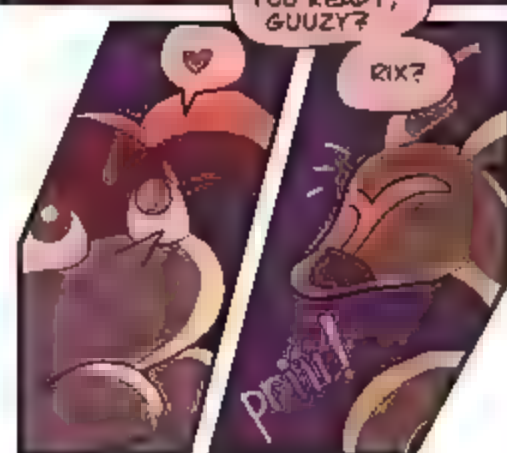
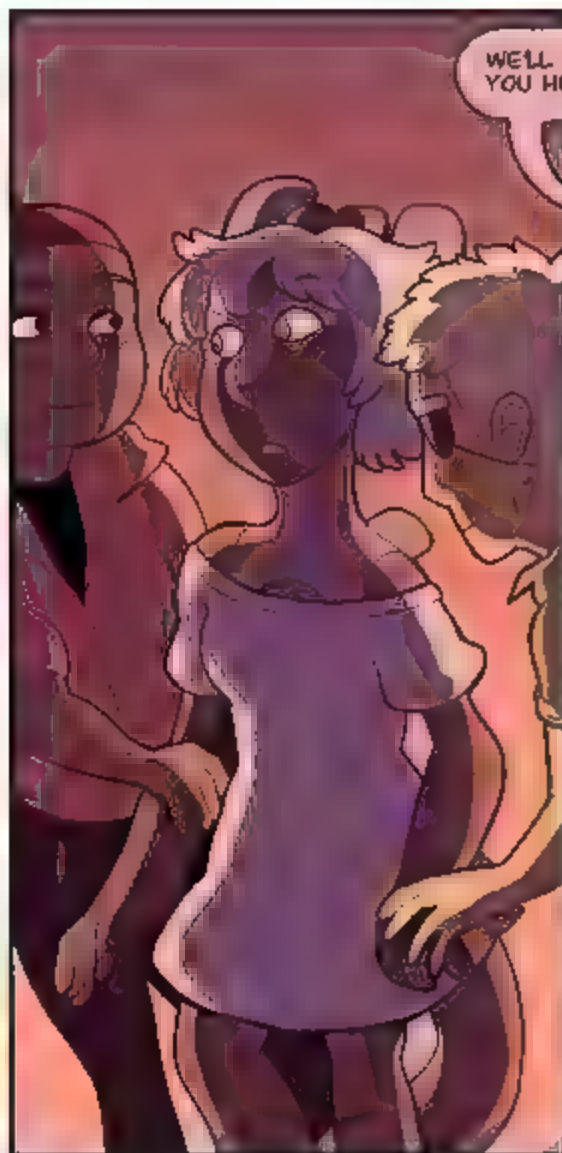
I WAS
WRONG.

EVERYTHING
WAS WRONG.

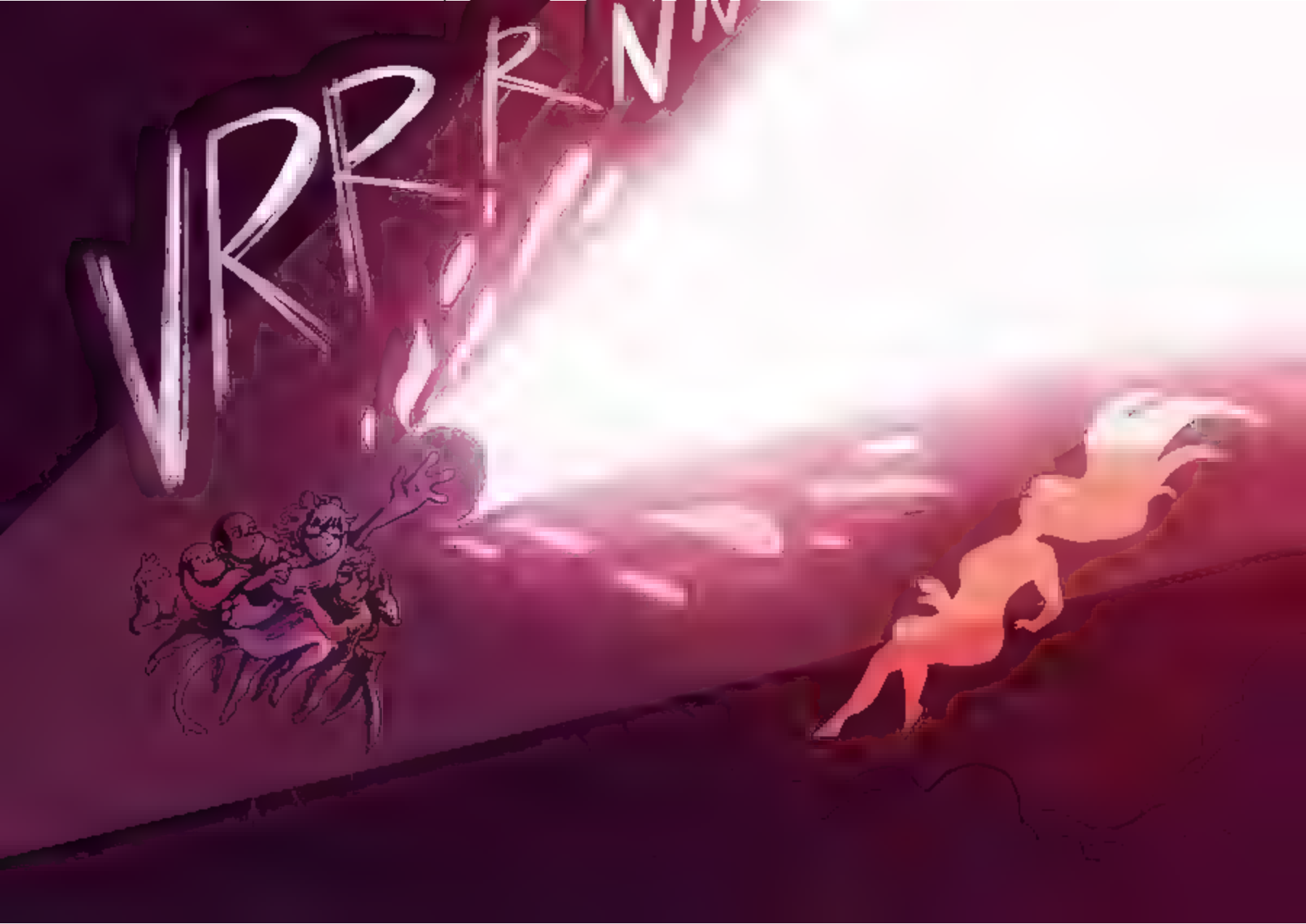
PLEASE...

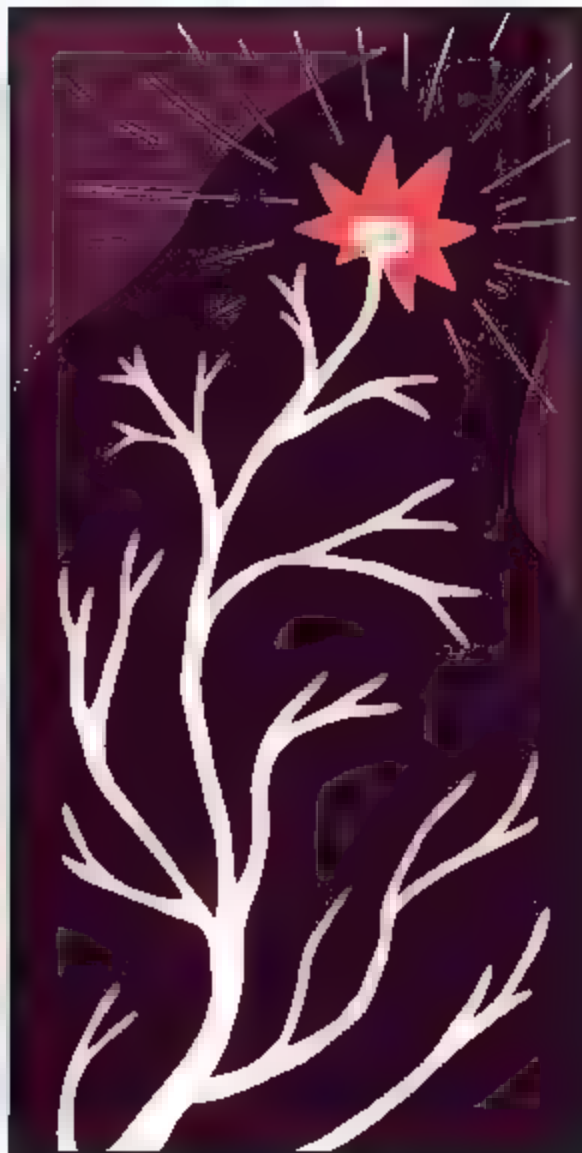
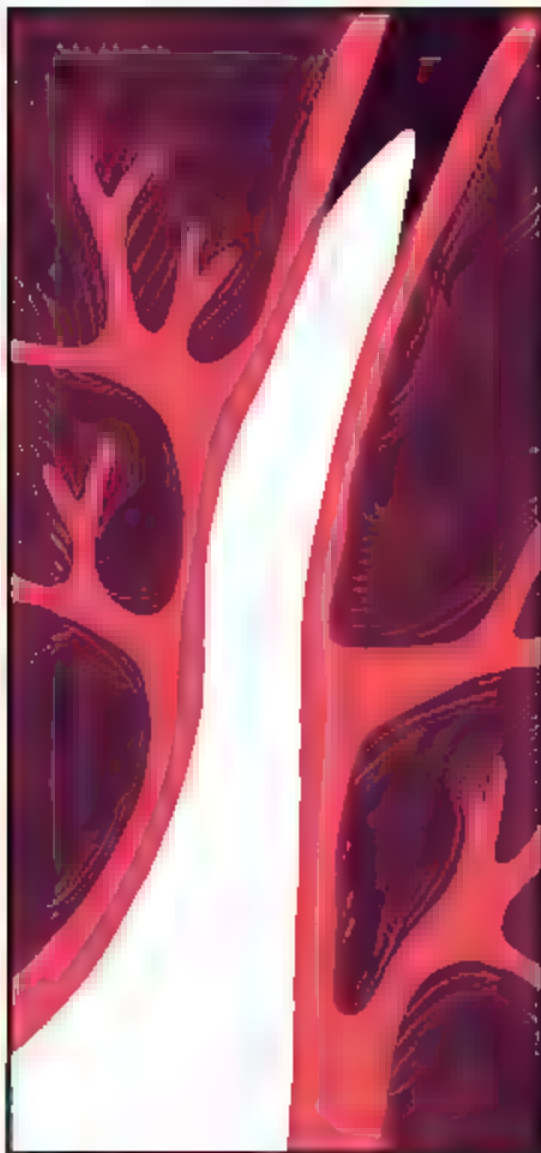
PLEASE
HELP ME.













I UNDERSTAND NOW.

I UNDERSTAND WHY I FAILED.

THE MONSTERS WERE MADE
FROM A NEW ELEMENT.

AN UNKNOWN FORCE WE FOUND
HIDDEN IN HUMAN BLOOD.

WE AMPLIFIED THAT FORCE
UNTIL A NORMAL HUMAN BODY
COULD NO LONGER CONTAIN IT.

WHEN EXPOSED,
A BODY HAD TO SHIFT
AND CHANGE, EXPANDING
RAPIDLY ALONG STRANGE
UNCHARTED PATHS...

TRYING DESPERATELY
TO KEEP UP WITH THAT POWER,
TO BE STRONG ENOUGH
TO HOLD ON.

BUT STILL, THAT POWER
WAS NOTHING...

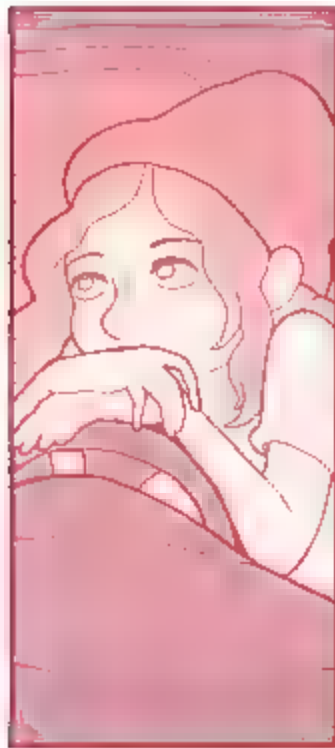
NOTHING MORE THAN HUMAN.

ALL HUMANS HAVE THIS ELEMENT INSIDE THEM.

WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS.

DOES IT LIE DORMANT, WAITING TO BE BROUGHT OUT AND TRANSFORMED?

OR DOES IT ALREADY HAVE SOME SECRET PURPOSE?



THESE THINGS WE CALL MONSTERS
ARE JUST AN EXTENSION OF HUMAN POWER.

MYSTERIOUS.

SECRET.

LIMITLESS.





MY QUEST TO DESTROY
THE MONSTERS WAS DOOMED
FROM THE START

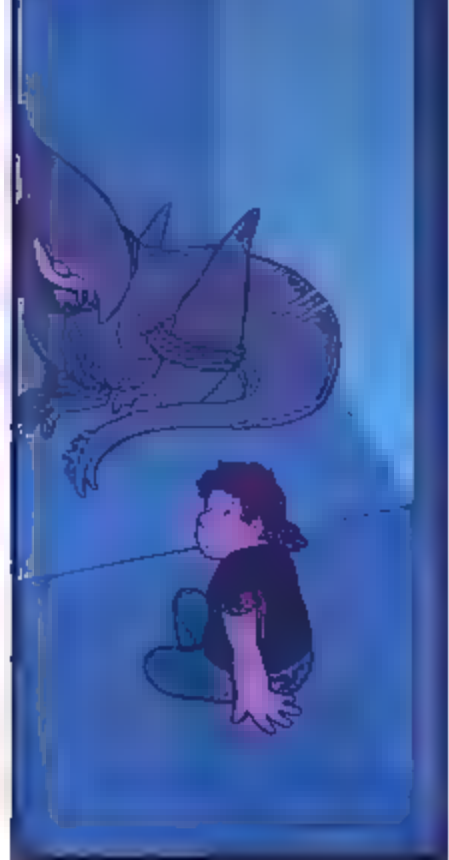
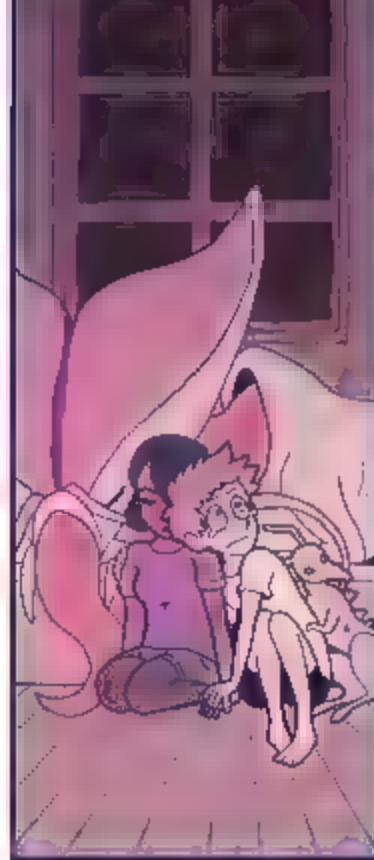
BECAUSE, IN THE END,
IT MEANT TRYING TO
DESTROY HUMANITY.

I WAS NEVER
STRONG ENOUGH
TO DO THAT.

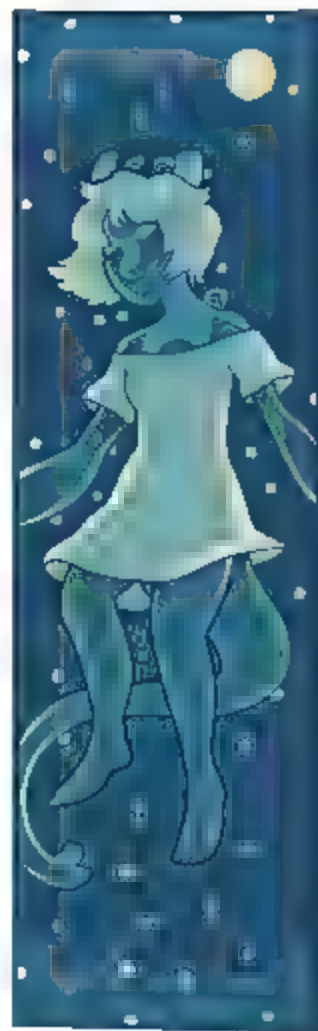


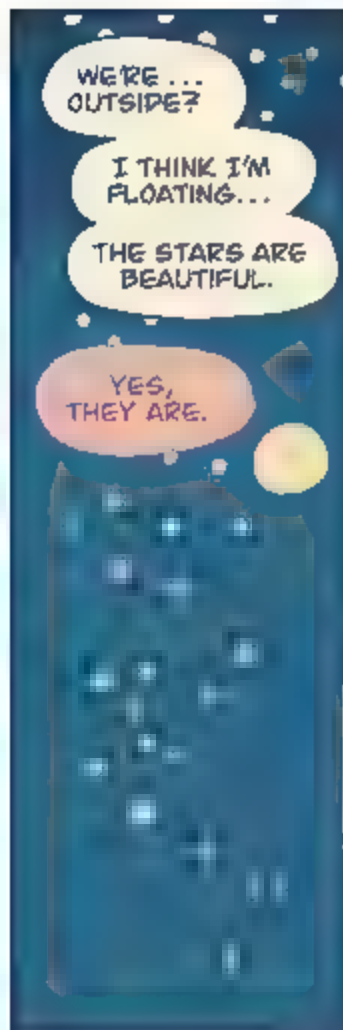
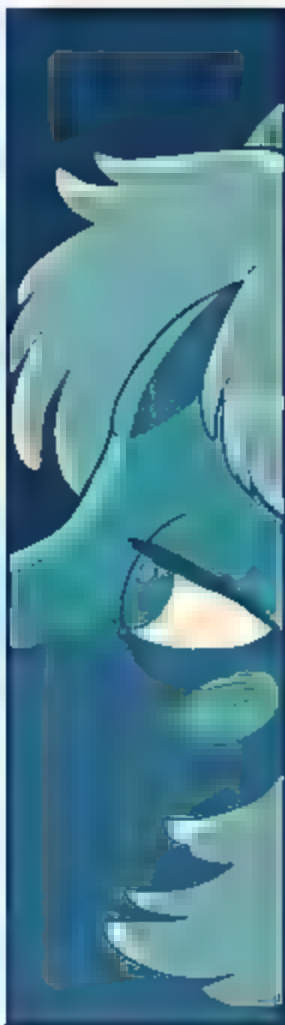


RUUMMBLE...







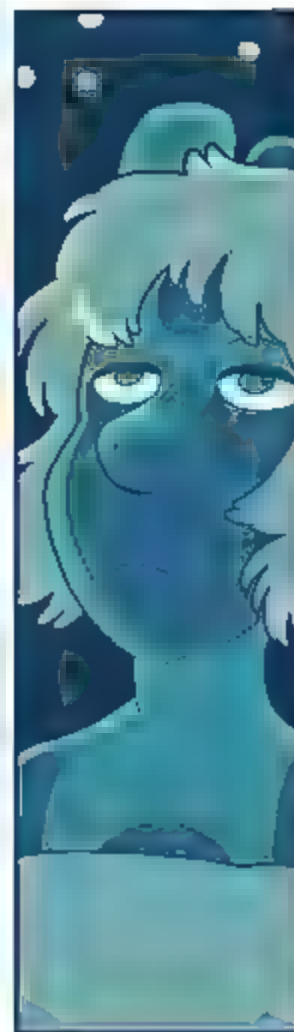


WERE ...
OUTSIDE?

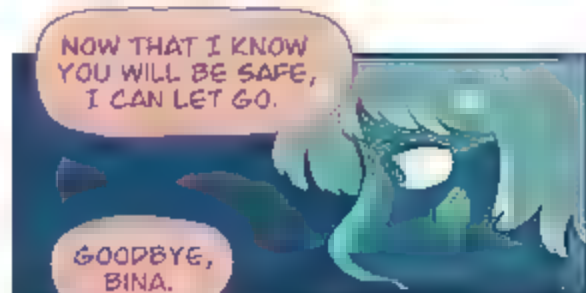
I THINK I'M
FLOATING...

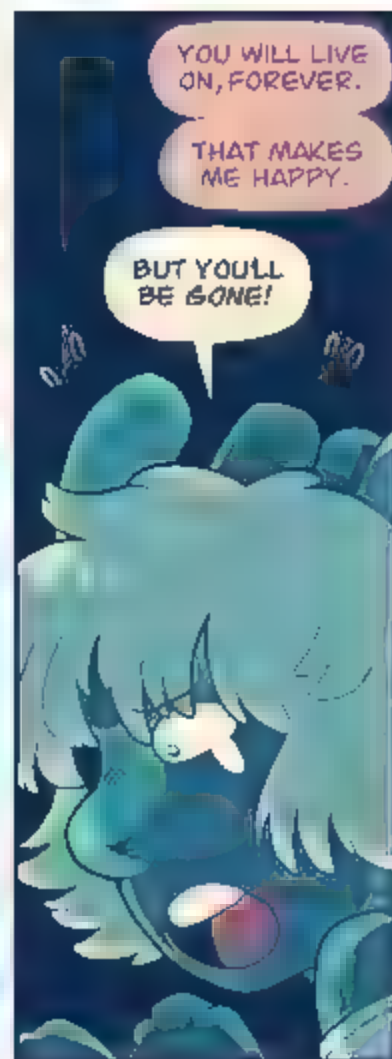
THE STARS ARE
BEAUTIFUL.

YES,
THEY ARE.



AYO?!



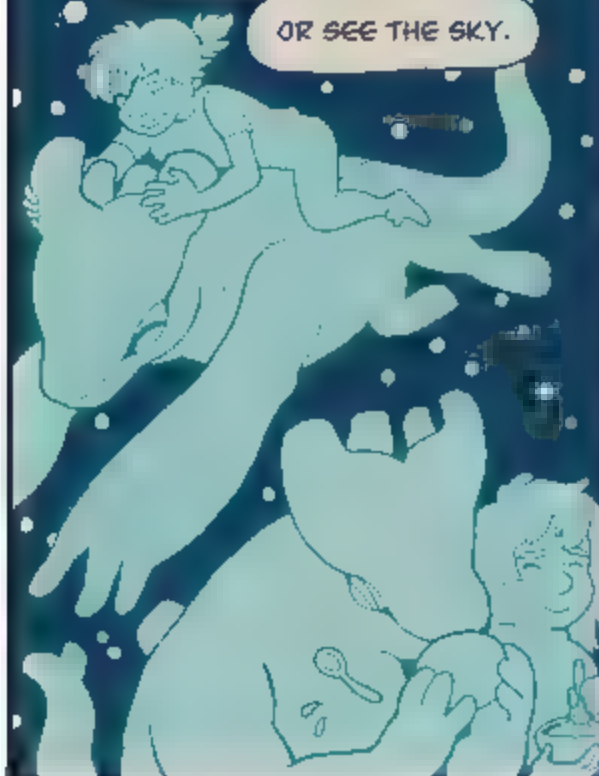


YOU MIGHT TECHNICALLY
BE "ALIVE"

BUT YOU WON'T, LIKE,
RUN IN THE GRASS, AND STUFF...

OR TASTE YOUR FAVORITE
FOOD, OR DRINK WHEN
YOU'RE THIRSTY...

OR SEE THE SKY.

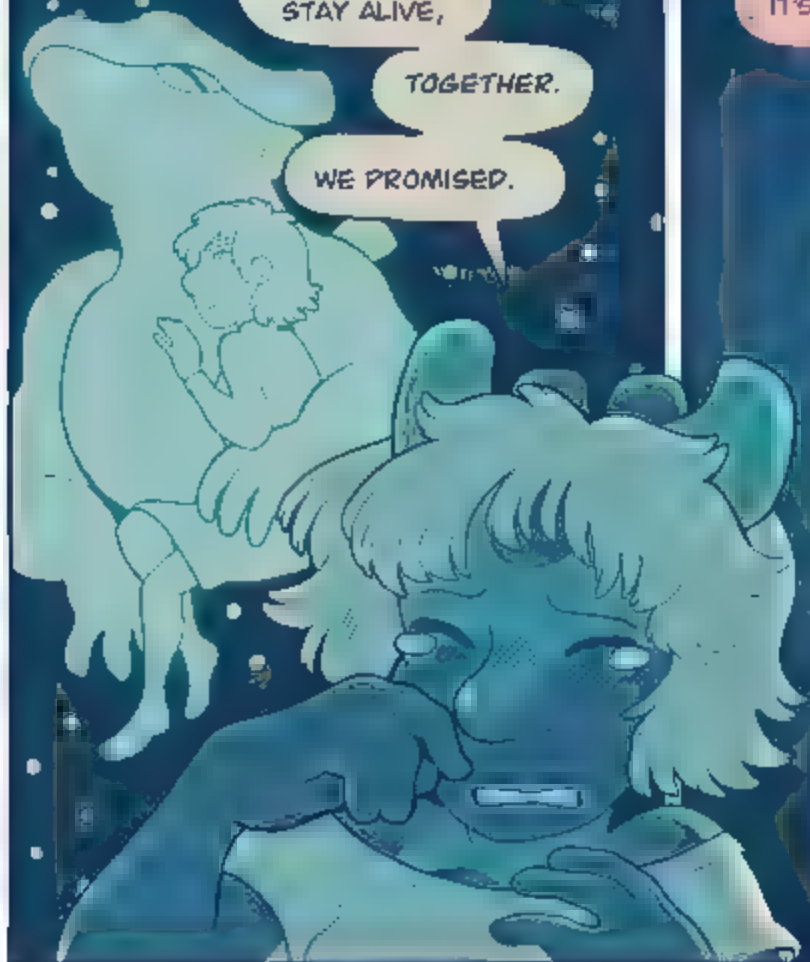


I DON'T WANT THAT FOR YOU.

I WANT US TO
STAY ALIVE,

TOGETHER.


WE PROMISED.



I'M SORRY,
BINA.

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.





...NO WAY.

NO
WAY!

WE'VE COME THIS
FAR- I'M NOT
LETTING YOU GO!

BINA- WHAT
ARE YOU-

STOP-

YOU DON'T
KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE DOING.

YOU MIGHT
GET HURT.

I WON'T!
I CAN
FEEL IT!

BUT YOU'LL
LIVE FOREVER
IF YOU STAY THE
WAY YOU ARE!

DON'T THROW
THAT AWAY!

I DON'T
WANT THAT
ANYMORE!

I DON'T WANT
TO HAVE MY LIFE

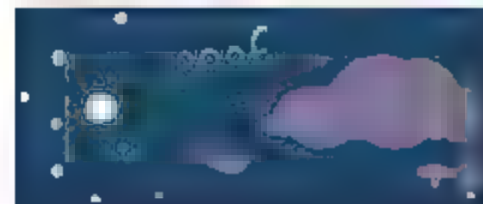
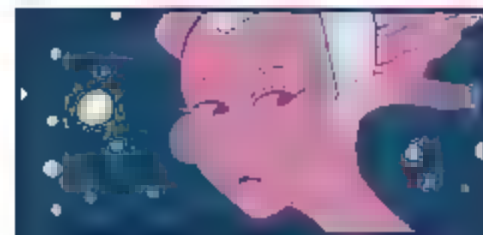
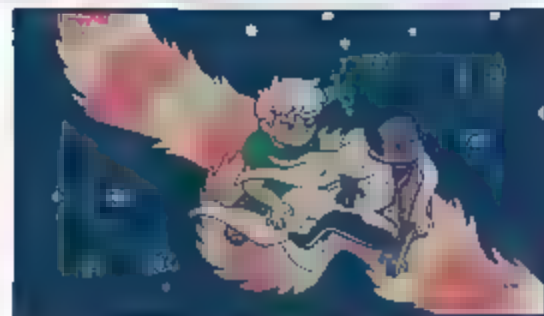
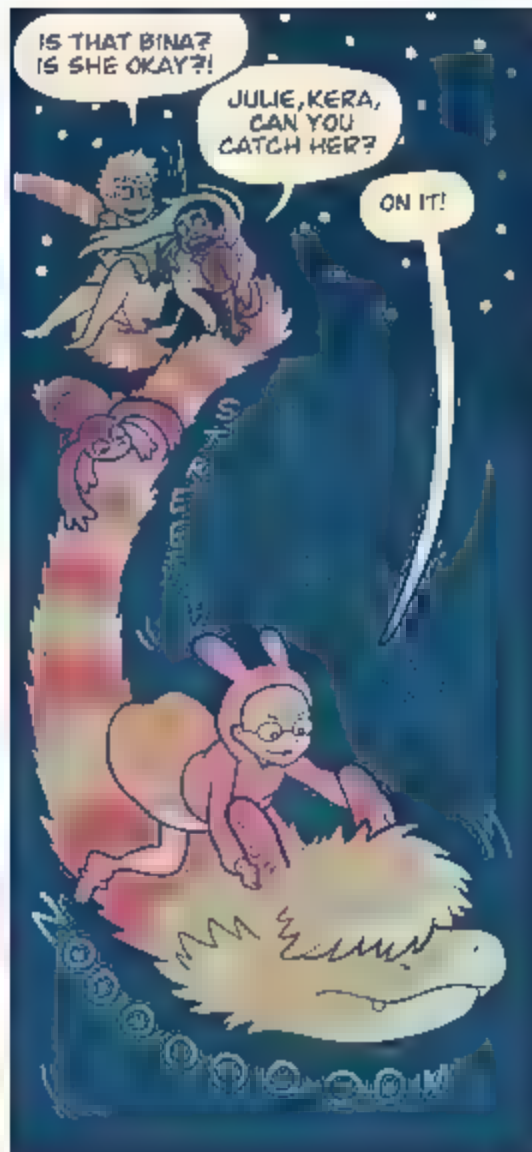
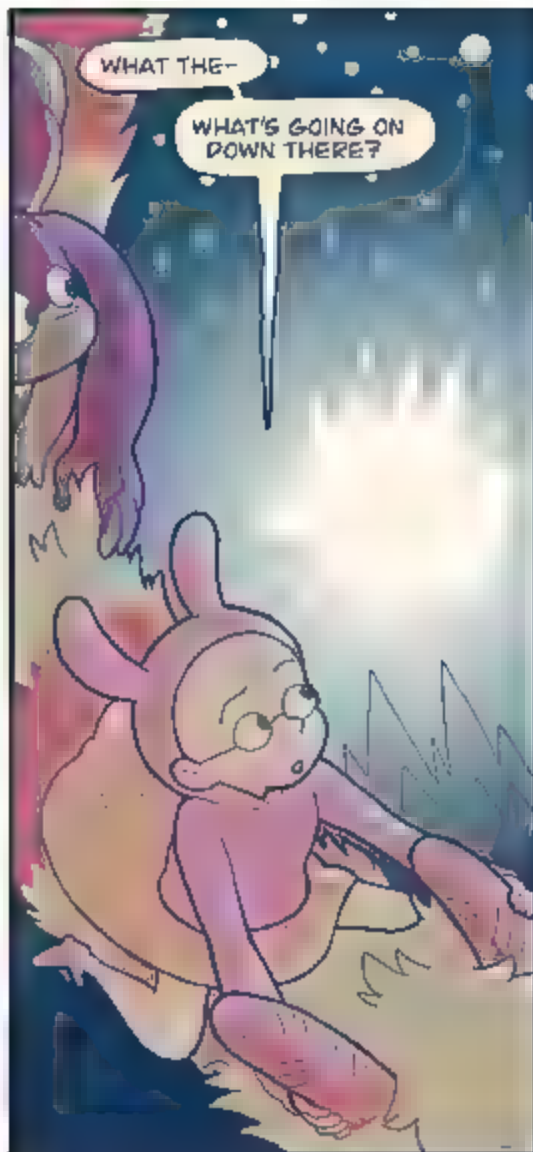
IF IT'S ONLY
HERE BECAUSE
I TOOK IT
FROM YOU!

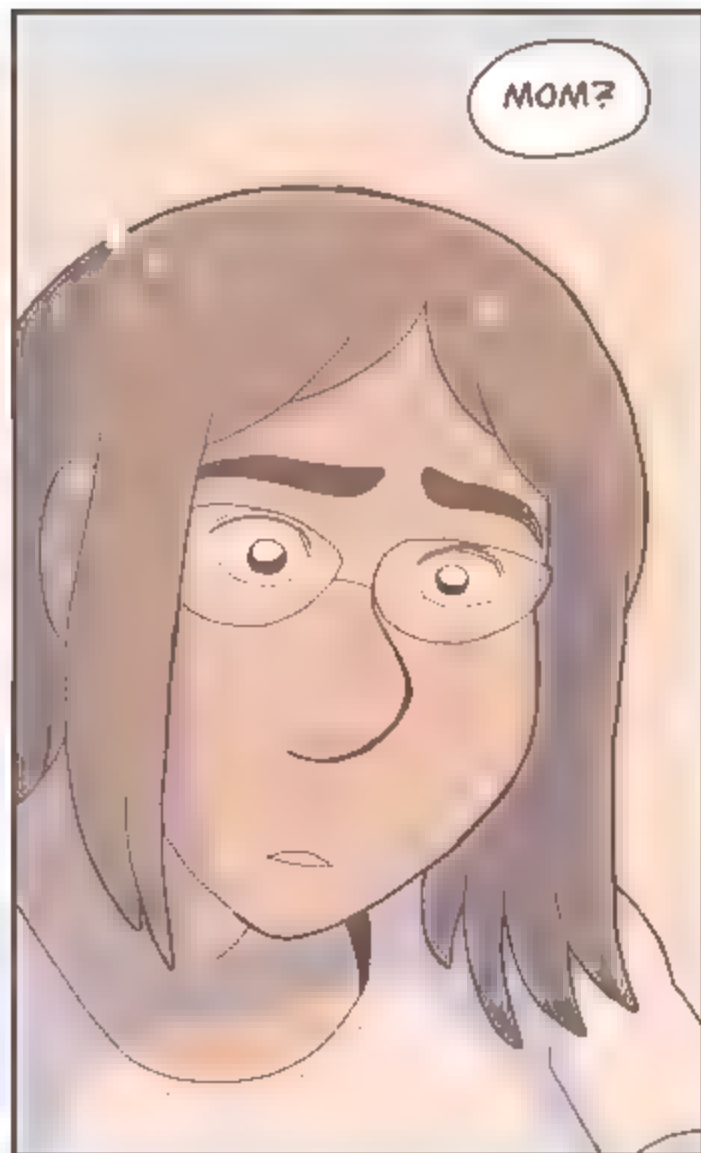
PING!

RARGH!

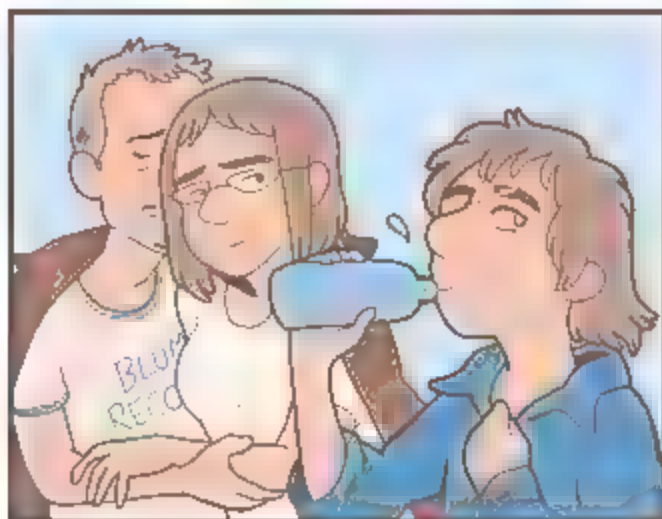
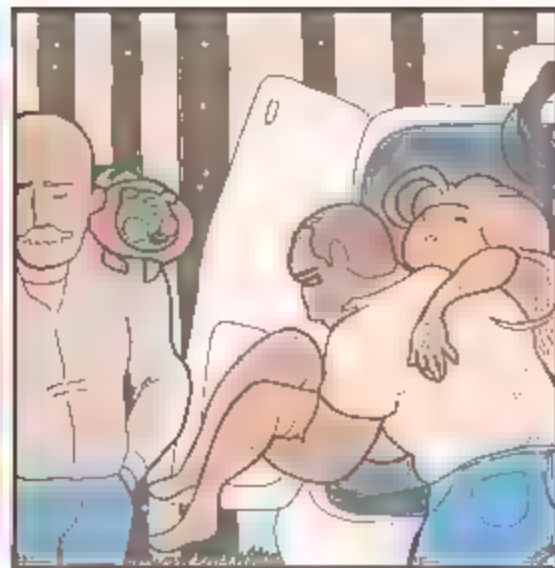






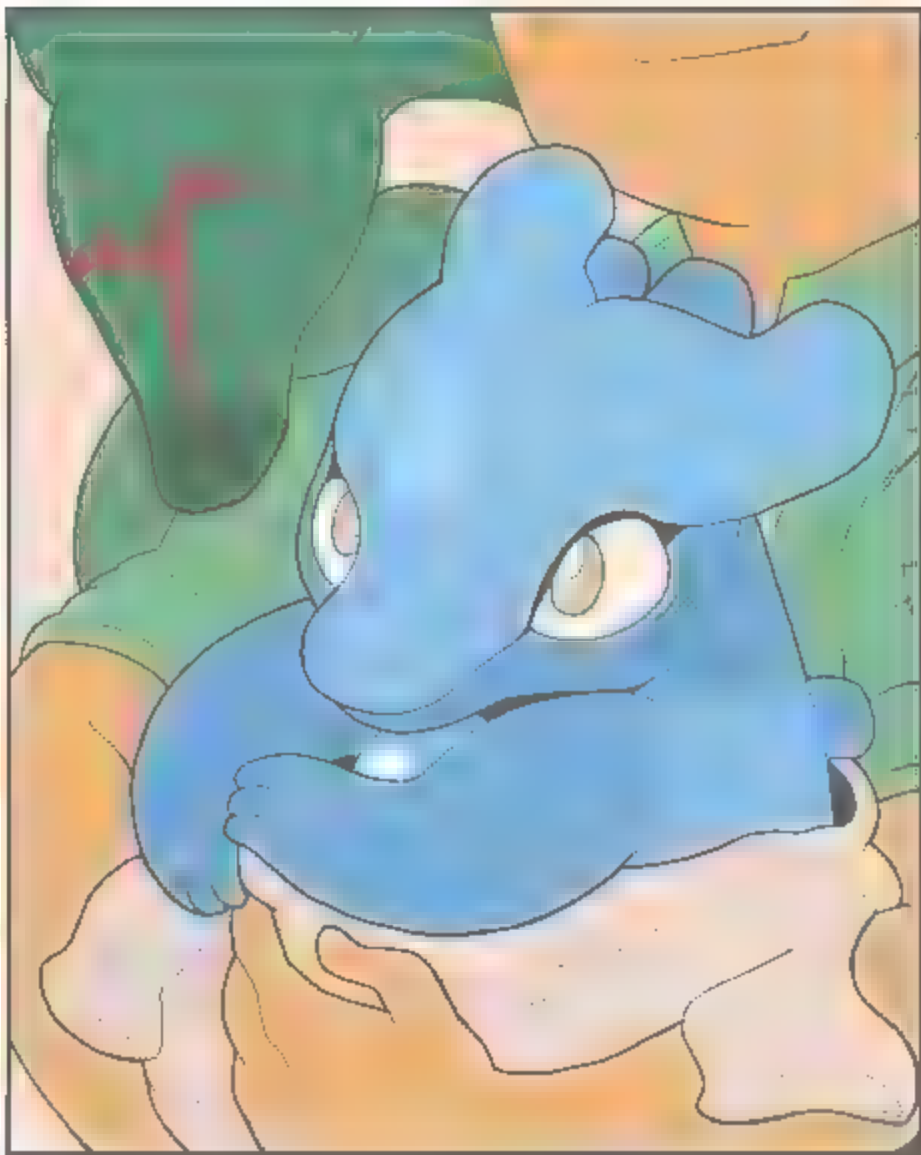


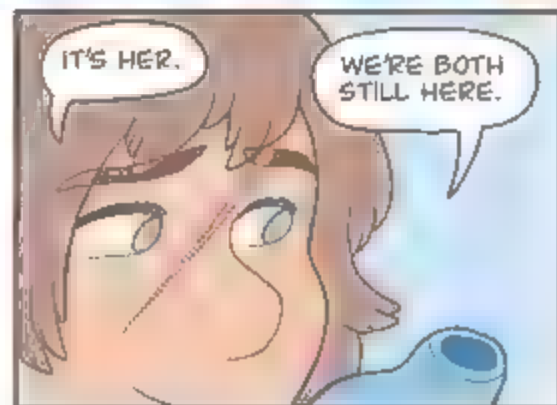
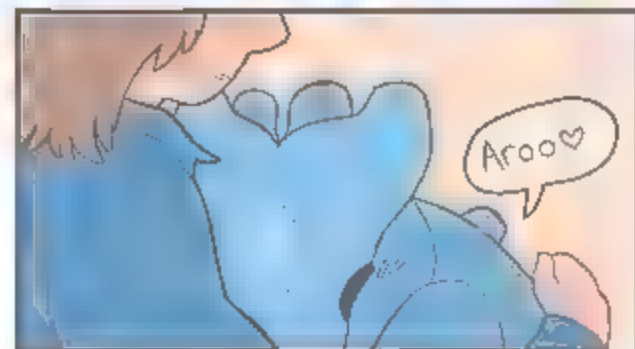
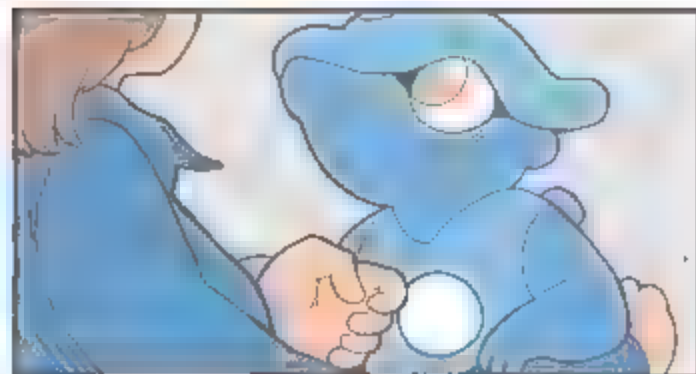
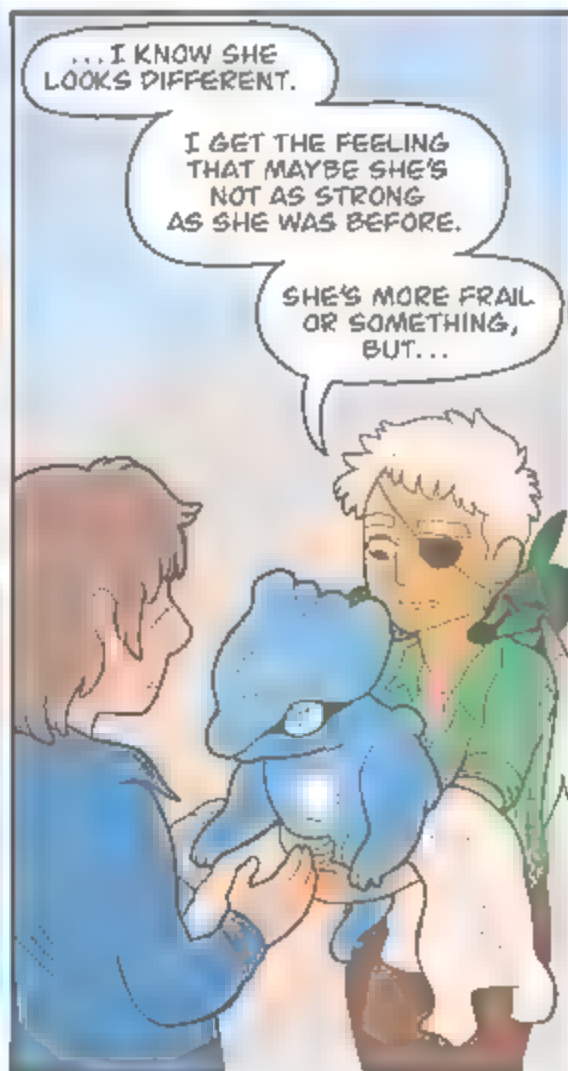


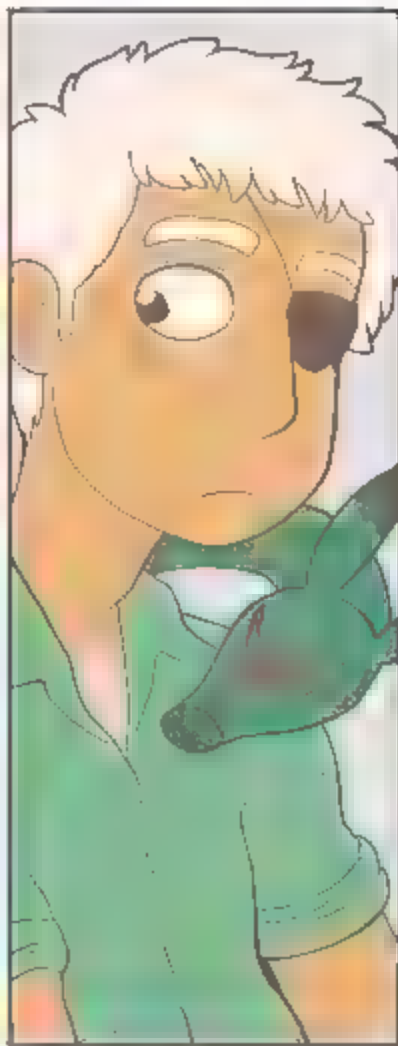
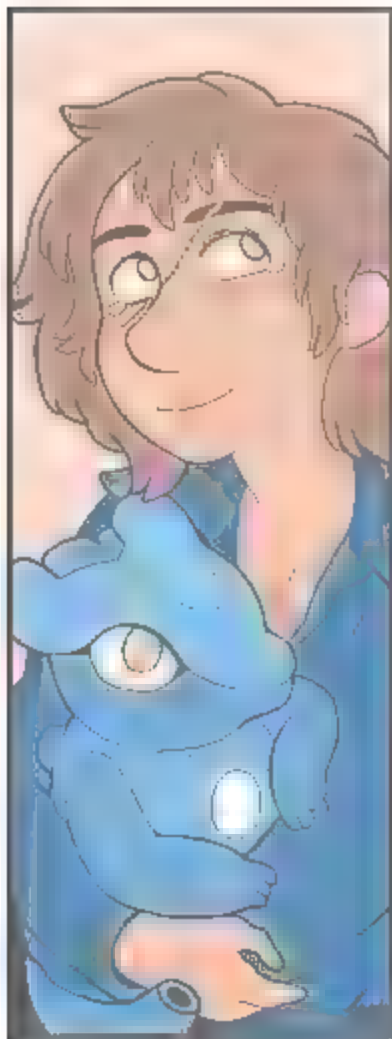


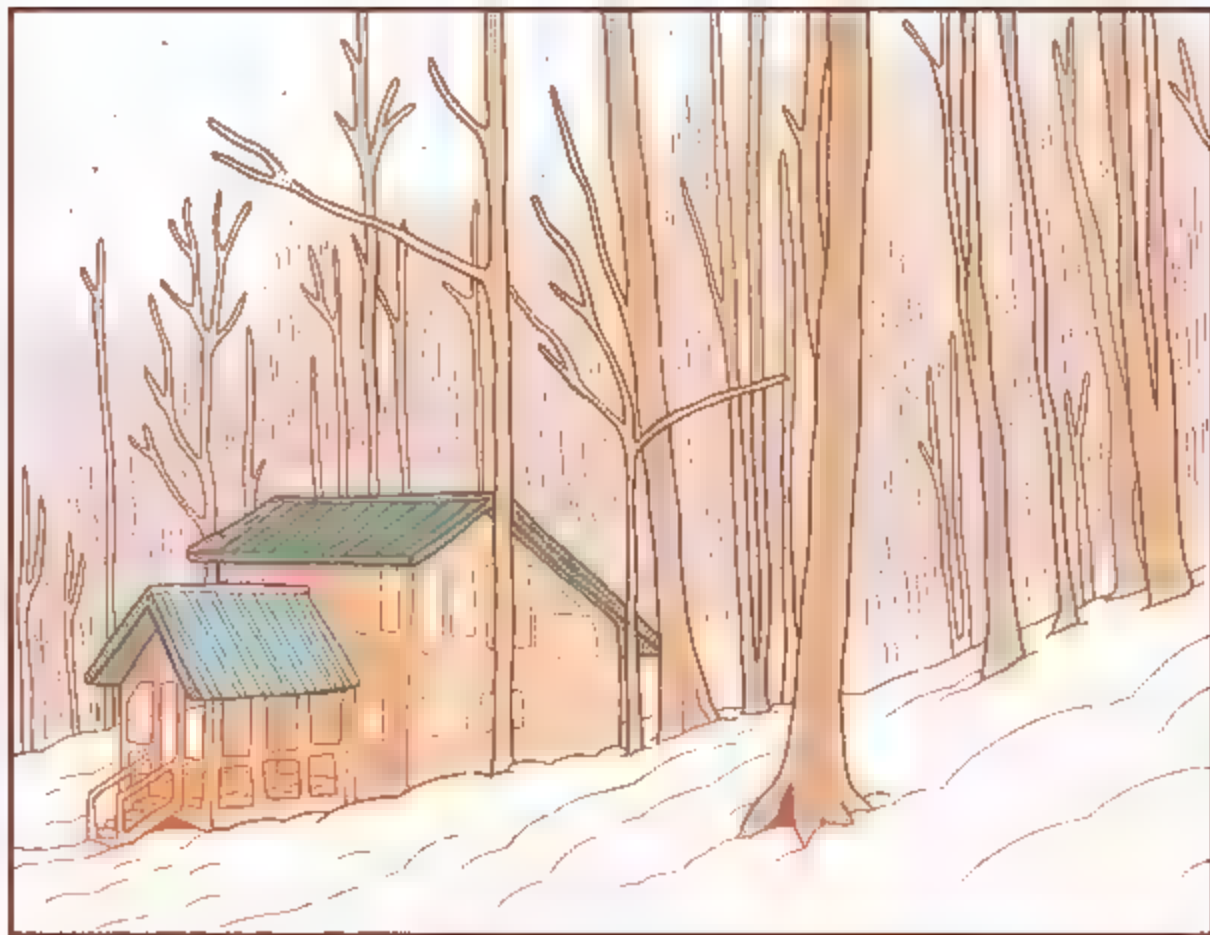












DEAR CLAIRE-

I'M GLAD YOUR
FAMILY GOT TO
GO ON VACATION
TOO.

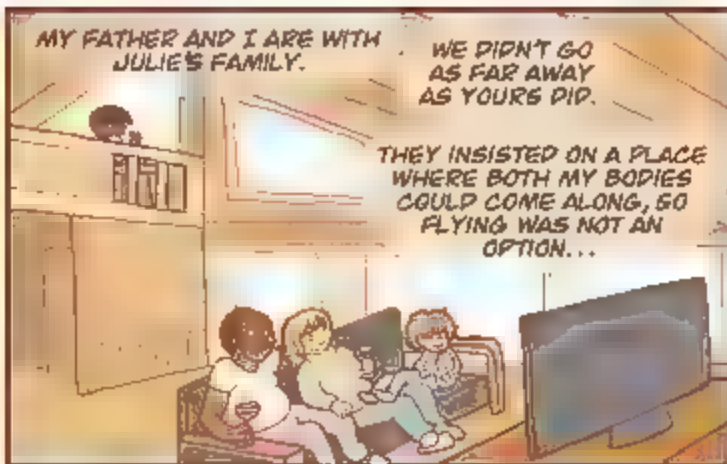
OURS HAS
BEEN VERY
NICE.



MY FATHER AND I ARE WITH
JULIE'S FAMILY.

WE DIDN'T GO
AS FAR AWAY
AS YOURS DID.

THEY INSISTED ON A PLACE
WHERE BOTH MY BODIES
COULD COME ALONG, SO
FLYING WAS NOT AN
OPTION...



THEY ARE VERY KIND.



STILL, I LIKE THIS CABIN.
JULIE SAYS IT'S FANCY.



IT EVEN HAS A HOT TUB.



~~I KNOW WE~~
~~LEFT THINGS~~
~~IN A STRANGE~~

~~I HOPE~~
~~WE CAN~~
~~TALK ABOUT~~

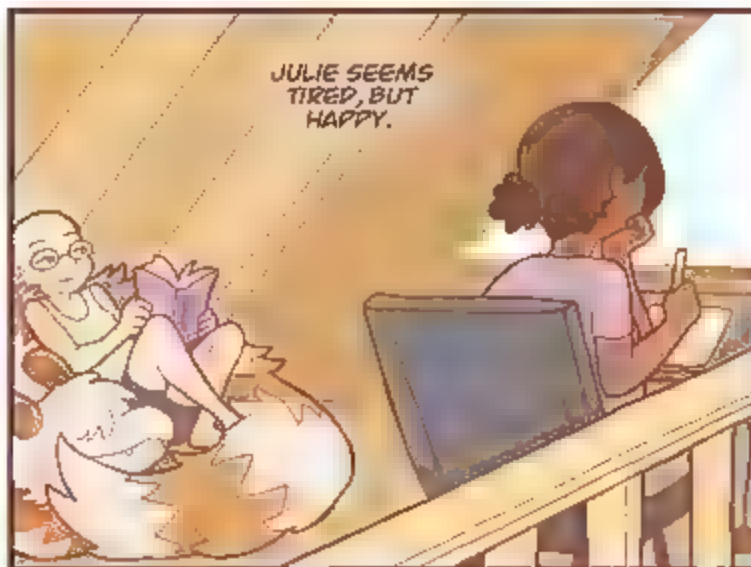


~~I'M NOT SURE~~
~~WHAT YOU WANT,~~
~~BUT I-~~

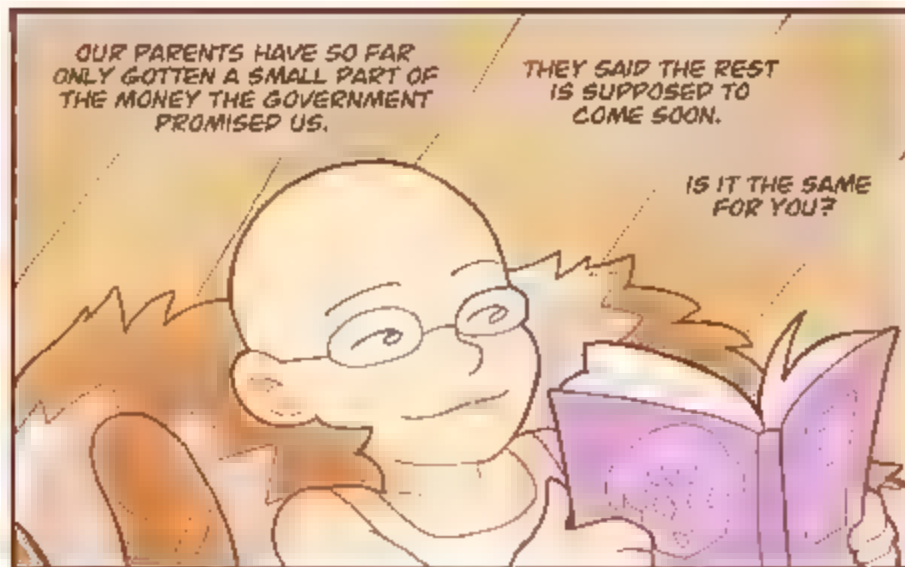


WISH YOU
WERE HERE!





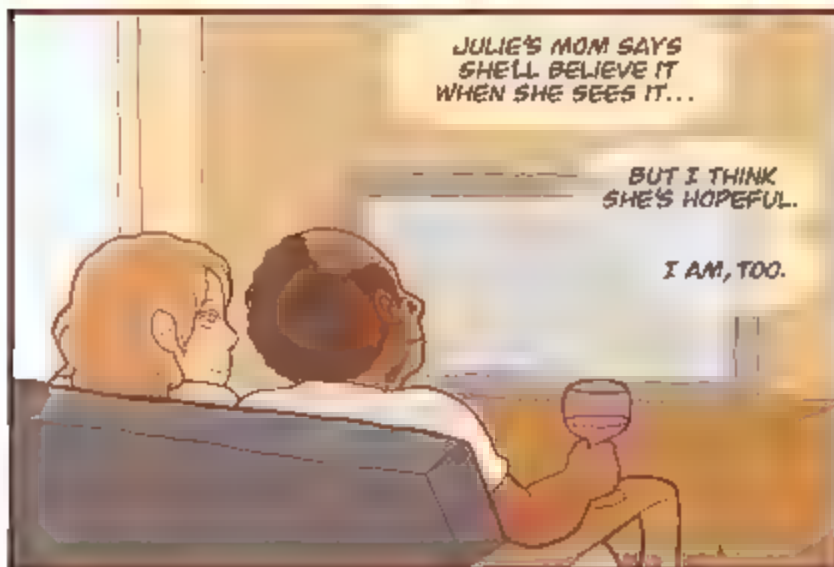
JULIE SEEMS
TIRED, BUT
HAPPY.



OUR PARENTS HAVE SO FAR
ONLY GOTTEN A SMALL PART OF
THE MONEY THE GOVERNMENT
PROMISED US.

THEY SAID THE REST
IS SUPPOSED TO
COME SOON.

IS IT THE SAME
FOR YOU?



JULIE'S MOM SAYS
SHE'LL BELIEVE IT
WHEN SHE SEES IT...

BUT I THINK
SHE'S HOPEFUL..

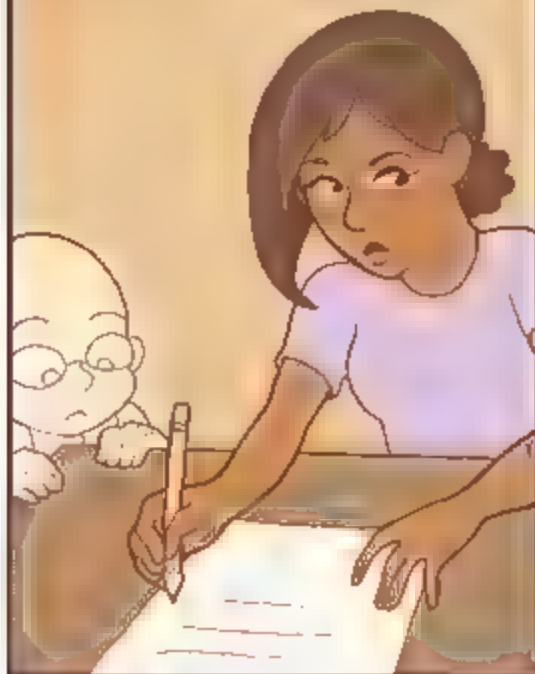
I AM, TOO.



I'M GLAD WE'RE GETTING
A CHANCE TO RELAX.

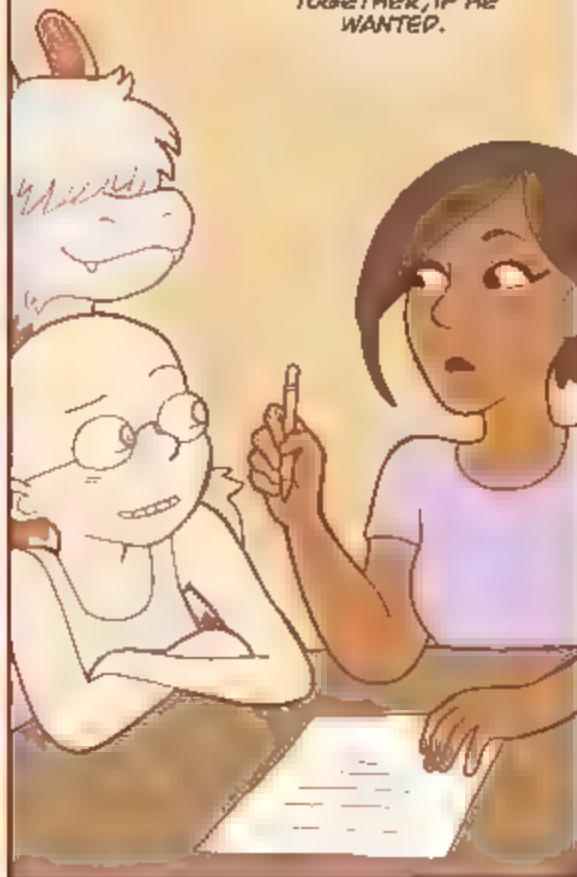
JULIE HASN'T TOLD ME MUCH
ABOUT WHAT SHE WANTS TO DO
AFTER THIS.

I SUPPOSE SHE'S THE
YOUNGEST, SO SHE STILL
HAS A FEW YEARS OF
HIGH SCHOOL LEFT.



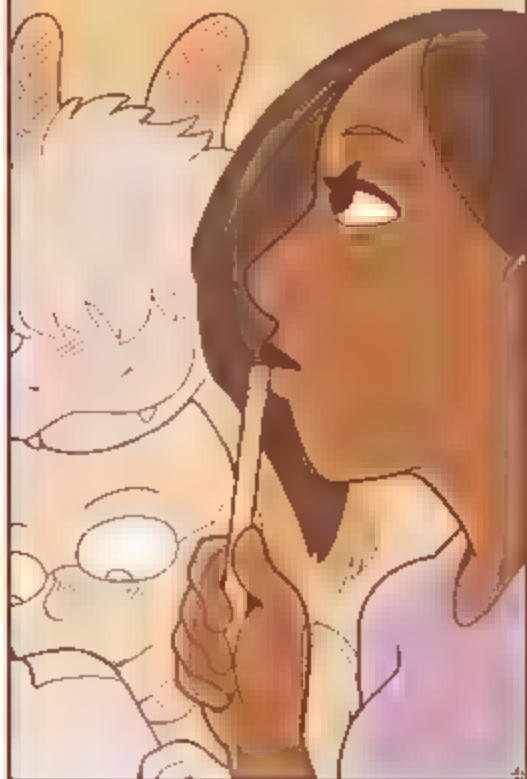
I THOUGHT,
AFTER GRADUATING,
I WOULD TAKE A FEW YEARS
JUST TO SPEND TIME WITH
MY FATHER.

WE COULD TRAVEL
TOGETHER, IF HE
WANTED.



AND AFTER THAT...

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN
INTERESTED IN
FASHION DESIGN...?



AS FOR THE OTHERS-
I'M NOT SURE HOW MUCH
YOU'VE HEARD?

I KNOW NANCY IS OVER 18,
SO SHE'S A LEGAL ADULT, AND
GOT HER MONEY DIRECTLY.

I HAVE NO IDEA
WHAT'S GOING ON
WITH HER MOTHER.

I JUST KNOW NANCY IS GOING
TO ART SCHOOL IN CALIFORNIA.

I WANNA MAKE
WEIRD STUFF.

RAY'S GOING TO TRY TO KEEP
GOING WITH HIS ACTING CAREER.

I SUPPOSE THEY MIGHT
END UP IN THE SAME PLACE.

JULIE TOLD ME THAT WEST
FINALLY OPENED UP TO HER
ABOUT HIS PARENTS-

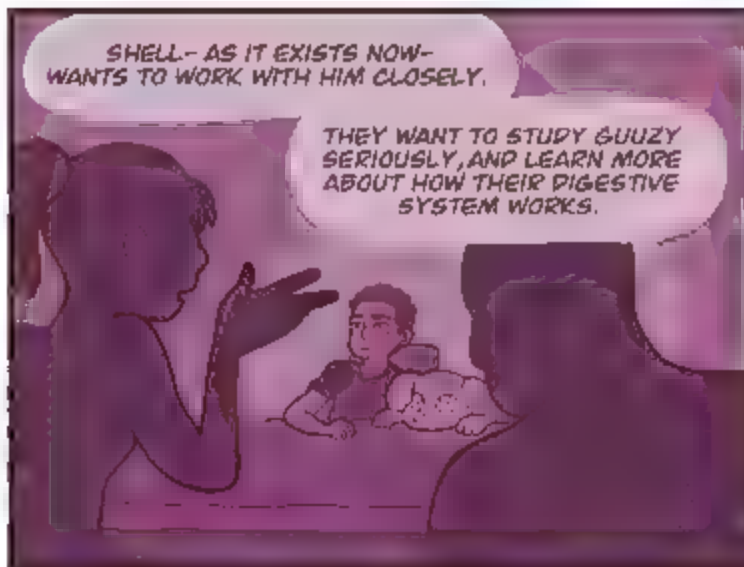
BUT SINCE IT WAS
SO PERSONAL, SHE
DIDN'T REPEAT
MUCH OF IT TO ME.

IT SOUNDS LIKE A DIFFICULT SITUATION-

BUT AT LEAST HE'S
TALKING TO THEM
MORE, NOW.

SHELL - AS IT EXISTS NOW-
WANTS TO WORK WITH HIM CLOSELY.

THEY WANT TO STUDY GUUZY
SERIOUSLY, AND LEARN MORE
ABOUT HOW THEIR DIGESTIVE
SYSTEM WORKS.



MAYBE THEY CAN
FIGURE OUT SOME WAY-

SURGICALLY, PERHAPS-

THAT WEST WILL BE
ABLE TO AT LEAST TASTE
FOOD AGAIN.



IT SOUNDS LIKE IT WOULD
BE RATHER INVASIVE, AND
A LOT TO DEAL WITH.

WEST SAID HE WOULD
THINK ABOUT IT.



HE SPENDS A LOT
OF TIME AT SHELL
HEADQUARTERS
ANYWAY...

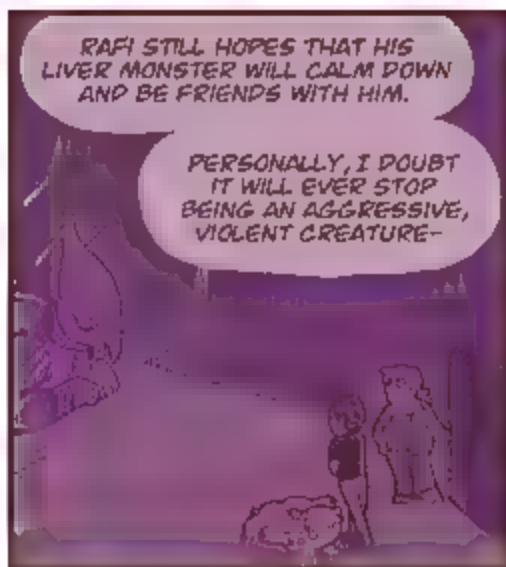


WITH RAFI.



RAFI STILL HOPES THAT HIS
LIVER MONSTER WILL CALM DOWN
AND BE FRIENDS WITH HIM.

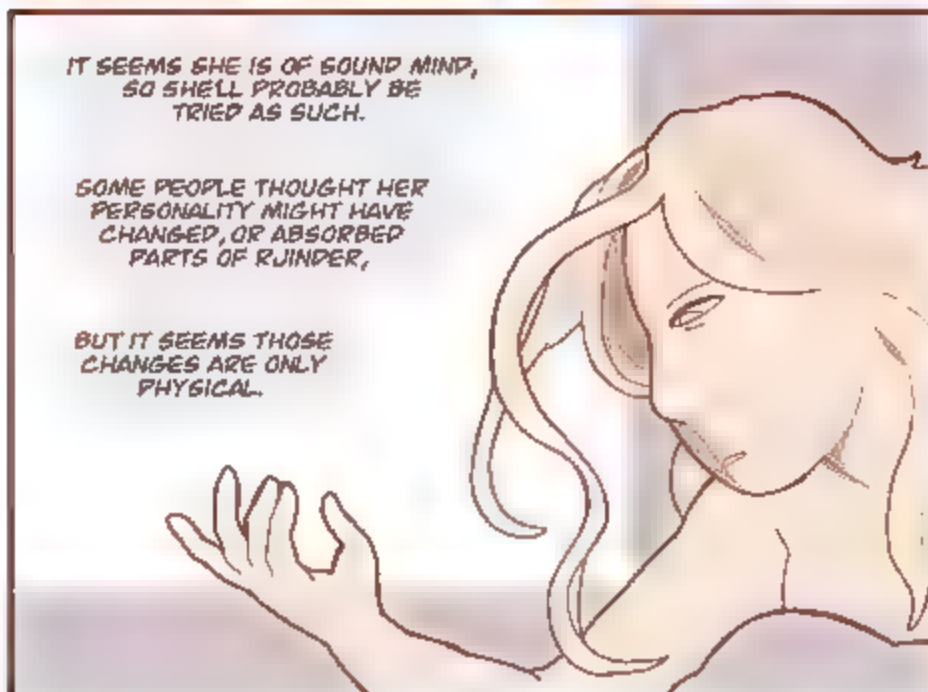
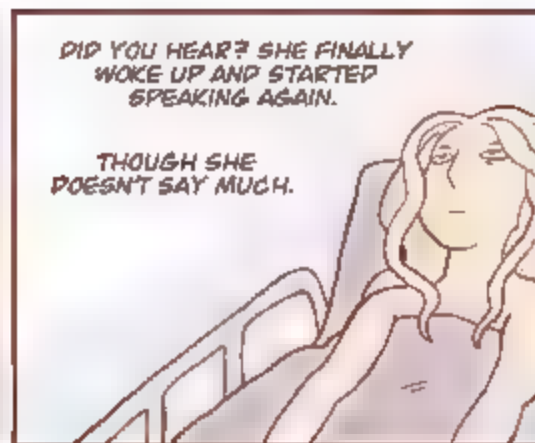
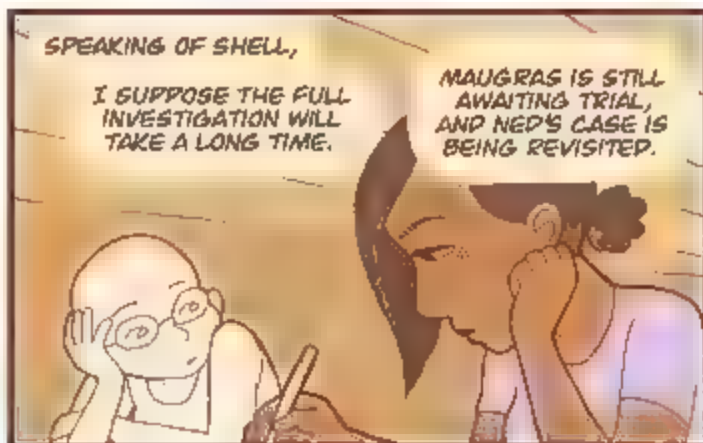
PERSONALLY, I DOUBT
IT WILL EVER STOP
BEING AN AGGRESSIVE,
VIOLENT CREATURE-



BUT RAFI IS WILLING
TO WAIT.

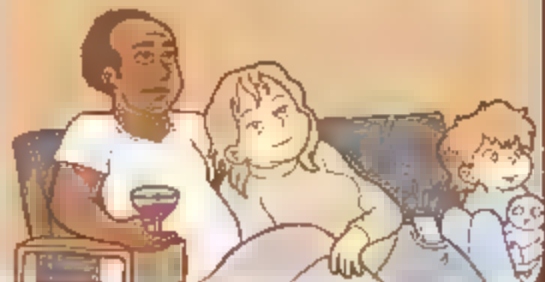
AND WEST IS HAPPY
TO KEEP HIM COMPANY.





I'M GLAD WE'RE ALL TAKING SOME
TIME TO GET AWAY FROM EVERYTHING.

IT WAS GETTING OVERWHELMING,
HAVING TO DEAL WITH ALL THE
QUESTIONS AND EXPLANATIONS.



THE WHOLE WORLD IS TALKING
ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED
IN ANTLER PINE.

IT'S SO STRANGE TO THINK
IT ALL HAPPENED IN JUST
ONE NIGHT.



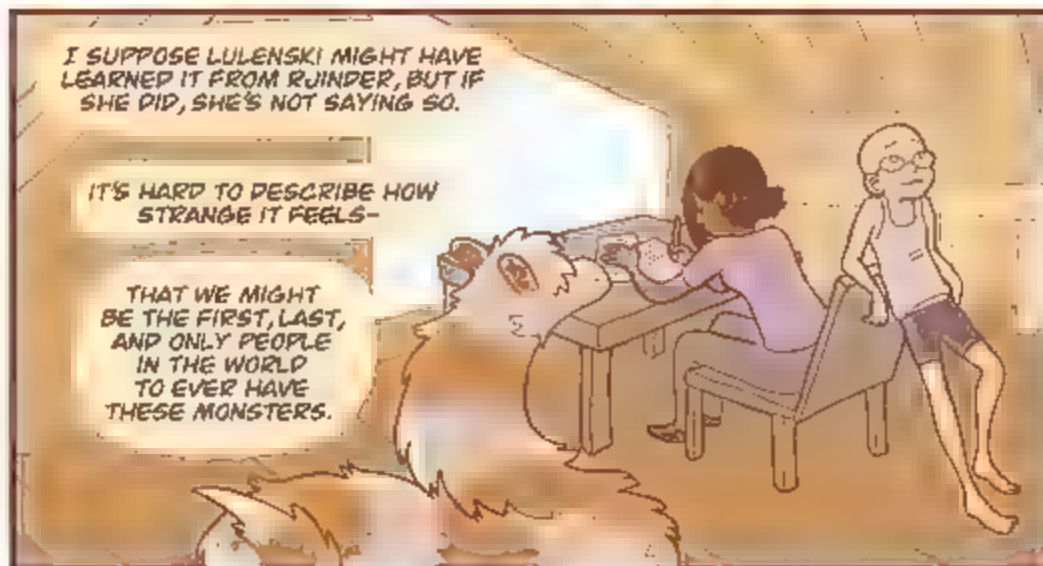
THE GHOSTS ARE ALL DESTROYED,
THEY SAY, AND THE PROCESS
USED TO MAKE THEM WAS LOST.



I SUPPOSE LULENSKI MIGHT HAVE
LEARNED IT FROM RJINDER, BUT IF
SHE DID, SHE'S NOT SAYING SO.

IT'S HARD TO DESCRIBE HOW
STRANGE IT FEELS—

THAT WE MIGHT
BE THE FIRST, LAST,
AND ONLY PEOPLE
IN THE WORLD
TO EVER HAVE
THESE MONSTERS.



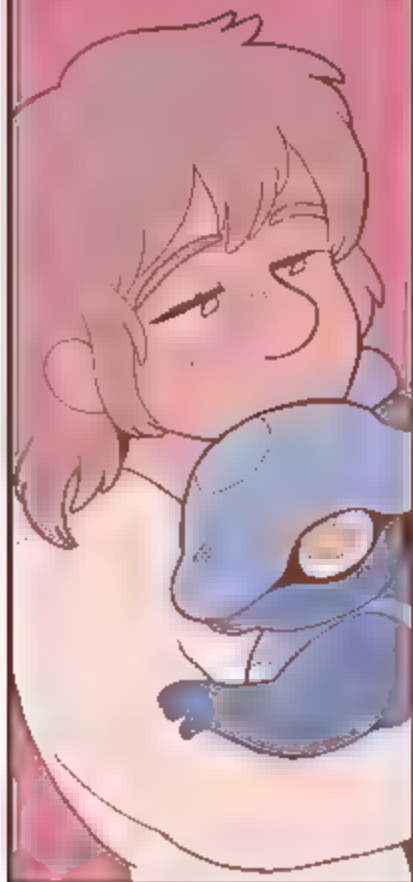
A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE,
IN SOME WAYS...

YES, EVEN AFTER EVERYTHING
THAT HAPPENED TO US, I STILL
WANT TO CALL IT THAT.



EVEN AFTER WHAT
BINA TOLD US...

ABOUT THE POTENTIAL
'COMPLICATIONS'
OF HAVING A MONSTER.



SHE HAS DECIDED
TO STAY AND WORK WITH
SHELL, STUDYING AYO
AND HER OWN BODY,

TO FIND OUT FOR SURE
HOW OUR CONNECTIONS
WITH OUR MONSTERS
WORK,

AND WHETHER THE
STRAIN IT PUTS ON
OUR BODIES IS REALLY
... WELL,

FATAL.



SHE SEEMS
NORMAL ENOUGH,
I SUPPOSE,
AFTER EVERYTHING.



I KNOW IT WAS SCARY
TO LEARN ABOUT THIS.
WE'RE ALL STILL FIGURING
OUT HOW TO FEEL ABOUT IT.

BUT MAYBE, WITH
STUDY, WE'LL FIND
OUT THAT THEORY
IS WRONG AFTER
ALL.



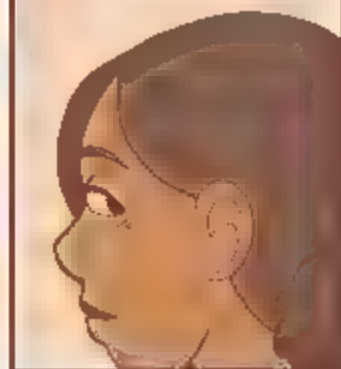
OR MAYBE, EVEN
IF IT IS TRUE,

THERE MIGHT BE
WAYS TO LESSEN
THE EFFECTS
AND MAKE IT
LIVABLE.



I'M HOPEFUL,
CLAIRE.
I REALLY AM.

AND I HOPE
YOU ARE, TOO.

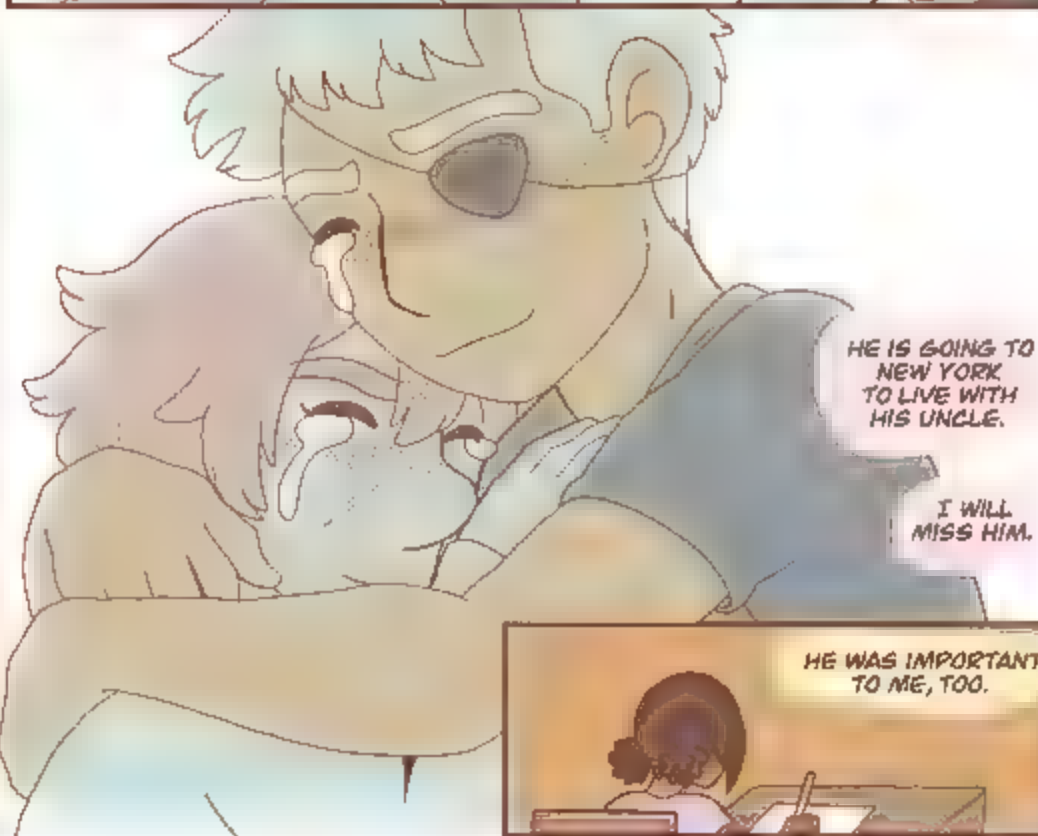


I'M SURE YOU'VE
HEARD-

BINA AND ABEL
BROKE UP.



IT SEEMS
IT WAS MUTUAL..

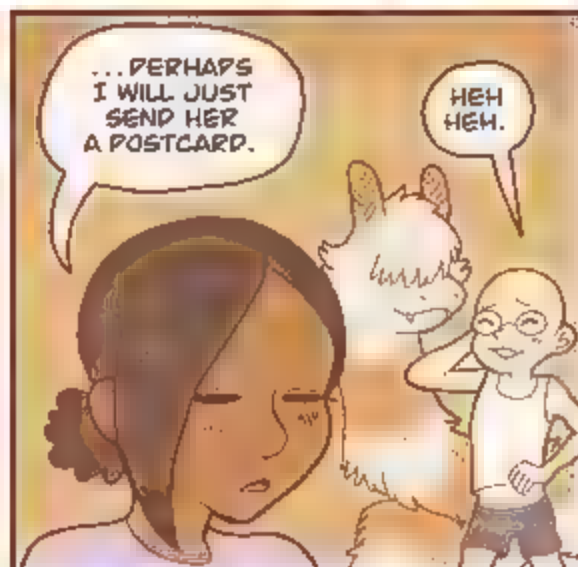
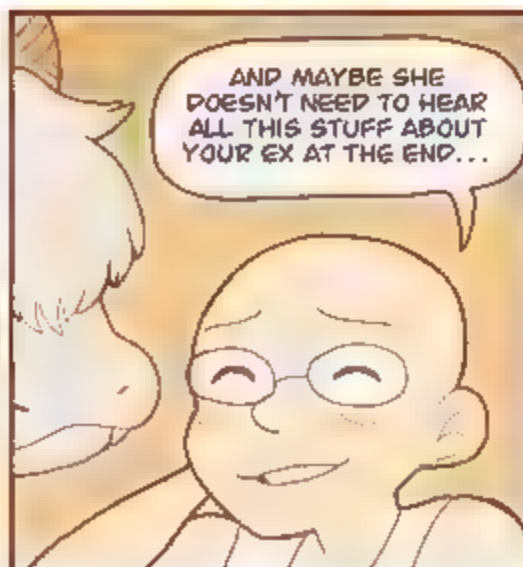
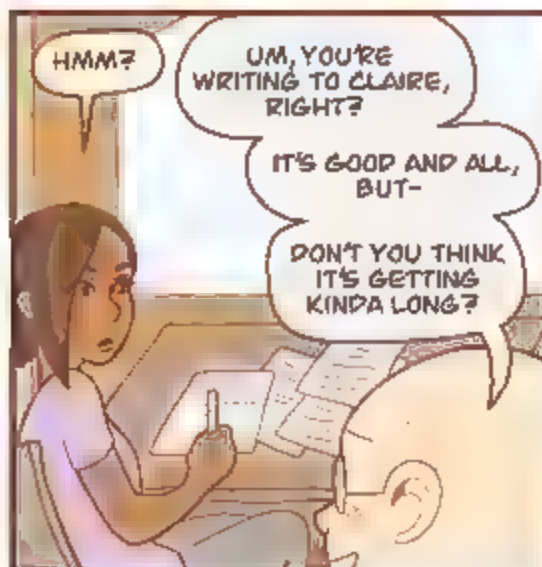
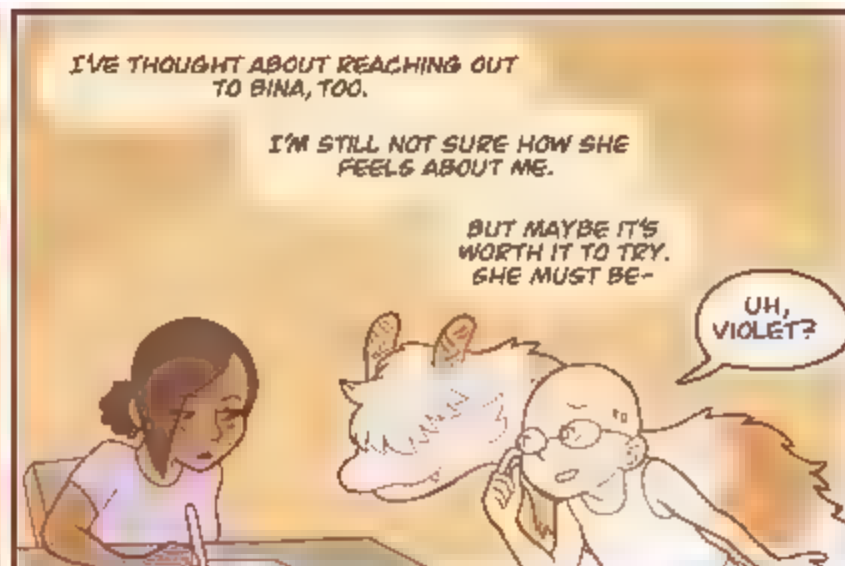
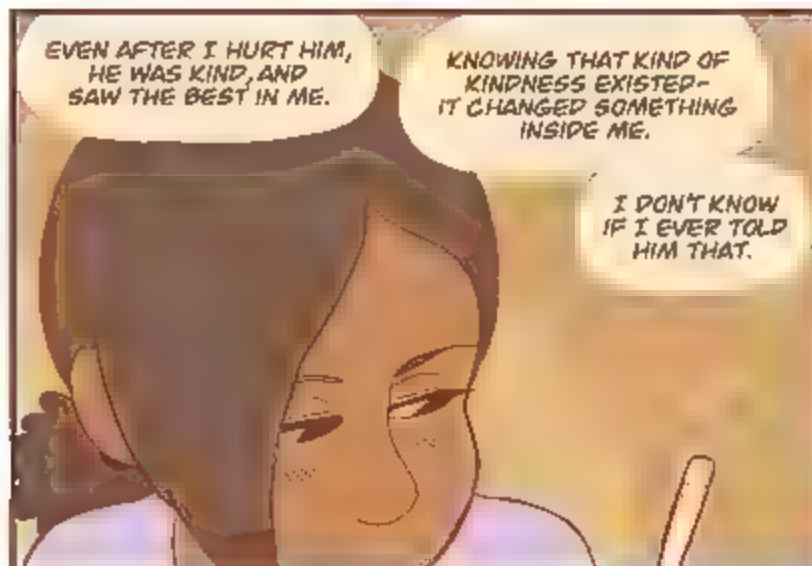


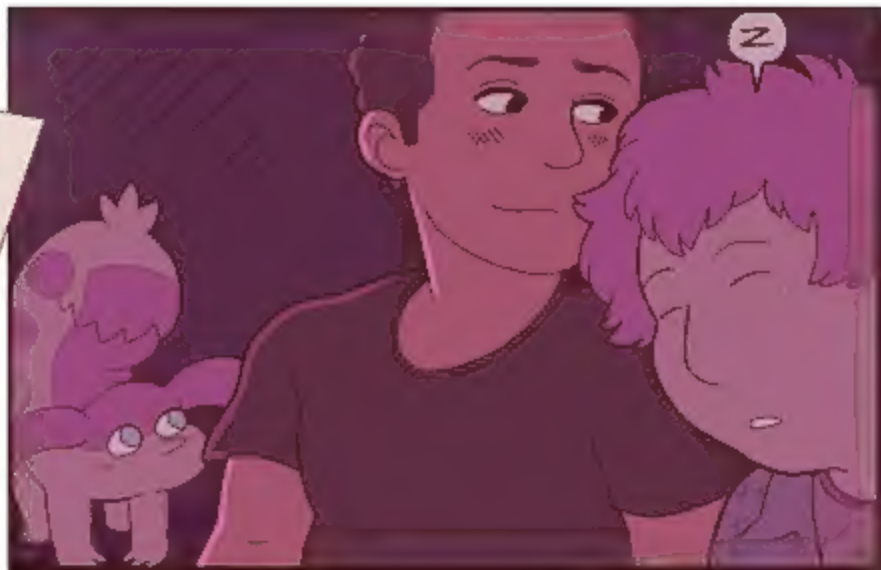
HE IS GOING TO
NEW YORK
TO LIVE WITH
HIS UNCLE.

I WILL
MISS HIM.

HE WAS IMPORTANT
TO ME, TOO.











THE END.

Thank You Magnolia!

